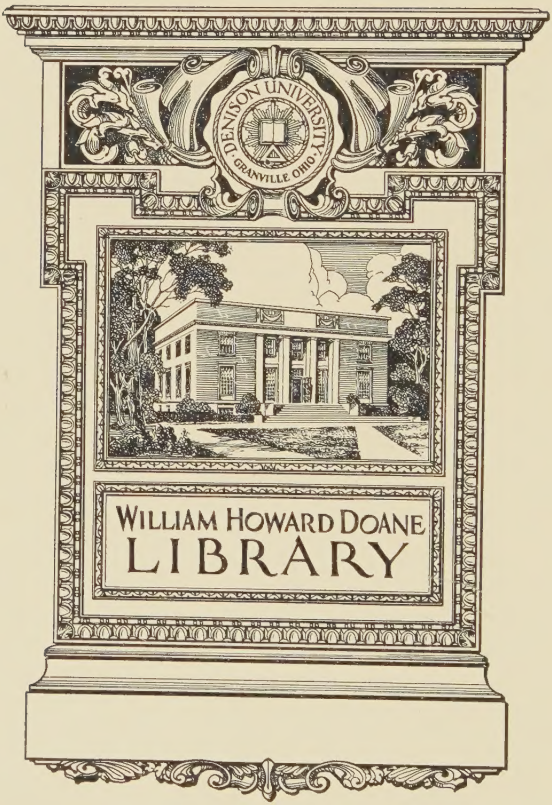
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St Aubin-du-Cormier
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A

HISTORY OF

FRANCE

FROM THE DEATH OF

LOUIS XI

BY

JOHN S. C. BRIDGE

VOLUME I

REIGN OF CHARLES VIII

REGENCY OF ANNE OF BEAUJEU

1483–1493

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PREFACE

The period of French history with which this volume deals has been neglected by historians. Little or nothing has been written about it in English beyond the necessarily brief accounts to be found in such general histories as those of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall (1795), Dean G. W. Kitchin (1873–1877), Mr. A. J. Grant (1900), and Mr. J. R. Moreton Macdonald (1915). Even in France a good many years have passed since the period was last studied in detail, the most recent books devoted to it being Dupuy's *Histoire de la Réunion de la Bretagne à la France*, published in 1880, and Pélicier's *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu*, published in 1882. The neglect may be attributed to two causes. It is due primarily to the comparative paucity of original materials, and especially to the silence of the one attractive contemporary writer, Philippe de Commynes, who quarrelled with Anne de Beaujeu, and revenged himself by omitting all reference to her career. It is also encouraged by the fact that the years immediately following the death of Louis XI seem to suffer by contrast both with those that came before them and with those that came after—on the one hand, with the dramatic interest of one of the most striking reigns in French history, and, on the other, with the romantic story of that first Italian expedition which is usually regarded as the beginning of modern European history.

Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that the period of Anne de Beaujeu's regency is lacking either in interest or in importance, and it may be questioned whether any decade in French history exercised a more decisive

influence in the creation of monarchical France. For this period witnessed the efforts and the failure of the States-General of Tours in 1484, an assembly which enjoyed an opportunity as favourable as was ever presented under the *ancien régime* for establishing constitutional government; in the coalition of jealous neighbours eager to arrest French progress it saw the first application of the theory of the balance of power; it beheld the acquisition by France of the great province of Brittany, essential to her unity, and vital to her safety; and, lastly, it saw the final extinction of the spirit of provincial feudalism which for so long had menaced the growth of the nation and curtailed the power of the Crown. This is a striking record for ten short years; and, were the tale of her achievement more familiar, the reputation of Anne de Beaujeu, by whom France was then governed, would stand much higher than it does. It has been truly said of Anne that she was 'the first and perhaps the best of that series of remarkable women who hold high place in the annals of the rulers of France'. It would scarcely be too much to say that by character, capacity, and the test of her limited opportunity, she is fitted to take her place by the side of the greatest women who in any country or in any age have moulded the destinies of nations.

It would seem that the time has come when the period of Anne's regency may profitably be studied again in the light of the materials which have accumulated since last it was examined in detail. Unfortunately, however, it is but too clear that the English writer who sets out to produce a history of France is guilty of an act of presumption which cannot readily be justified. The historians to whom France herself gives birth are amongst the most brilliant in the world, and their works are distinguished by a skill in construction, a clarity and elegance of style, a breadth of philosophic outlook, and a happy combination of polish with profundity, which must be the despair of the alien

labourer in the same field. It may be, however, that despite obvious points of inferiority the work of an English student will be recommended to his fellow-countrymen by the possession of some qualities necessarily denied to a more brilliant foreign scholarship; and it is in such a hope that I have undertaken this History. 'If I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired; but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto.'

JOHN S. C. BRIDGE.

Turville Park,
Henley-on-Thames, *July*, 1921.

ERRATUM

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SKETCH MAP OF BRITTANY . . . Frontispiece

I

INTRODUCTORY—FRANCE AT THE DEATH OF LOUIS XI

At the close of the fifteenth century Europe stood on the threshold of an age which may be reckoned as one of the most brilliant in the history of mankind. Upon every side there might be discerned the beginnings of those great movements by which religion would be revolutionized, art, literature, and science regenerated, politics and commerce transformed, and profound and permanent results achieved in every sphere of human interest and activity. The essential characteristics of the Middle Ages, whether in ideas, in ideals, in manners, in customs, or in institutions, were on the eve of vanishing entirely or of being altered beyond recognition; and man, emancipated from the thraldom of feudal and ecclesiastical tradition, was about to assert claims which had too long been delayed, and to enter upon that period of spiritual and intellectual ferment, whereof freedom for his mind and spirit was to be born. For not only were art and literature revived by contact with a rediscovered antiquity, but science sprang to life, pregnant with its marvellous message; and a new spirit awoke, curious and daring, which knew no limit to its ambitions but in its desires. Armed with the compass and the telescope, men set out to probe the mysteries of nature and to search out the secrets of the untracked seas. By revealing the existence of a new world, and by bringing to light new features in the old, the discoveries of Columbus, Vasco di Gama, and their successors rendered possible a future of trans-oceanic empire, whilst the commercial revolution effected by the diversion of the world's trade to new channels was to issue in the complete reconstruction of economic life. New worlds and new economic ideals contributed in turn to the completion of the slow process whereby the sense of nationality was being created among

the peoples of Europe. The self-conscious State and the highly centralized Government were new conceptions at the close of the fifteenth century in Spain, in England, and in France.

During the half century of her history which is comprised in the reigns of Charles VII and Louis XI, France had risen like a phoenix from the ashes of the Hundred Years' War, and if she had not outstripped her neighbours in the development of the new political tendencies, she assuredly had not lagged behind them. Whilst Spain was still linking up her long-divided provinces and rescuing her soil from Moorish dominion; whilst England was slowly passing from a period of intestine strife to glimmering hopes of an assured government and a settled succession; whilst Germany was still given over to feudal anarchy, and Italy, a congeries of hostile states, was a country only in name; in France the accomplishment of political and territorial unity, early undertaken and deliberately pursued, had advanced far towards completion under the united efforts of Crown and people. In no small measure this process had been hastened by the Hundred Years' War, the manifold evils of which had thus been redeemed by one immeasurable gain. When that long agony began, the people of France had been but dimly aware of a common stock and a common tongue; but gathered together round their King in the effort to expel the foreign foe, they had been awakened by joint endeavour and common suffering to a sense of solidarity and a consciousness of national sentiment. A confederacy of provinces loosely knit together by a wavering loyalty to the throne, France had entered upon the long war a kingdom in name alone. She emerged from it a country imbued with national sentiment, cherishing national ambitions, conscious of national aspirations and ideals. Unity, indeed, was not achieved as yet, but by the steady progress of the Crown towards a centralized despotism the consolidating influence of institutions was enabled to make itself felt, and peace began to amplify and perpetuate the results of war. As feudal anarchy and provincial independence gave way to administrative unity, a new spirit became manifest in every sphere of government. Hitherto of little account, the King's ordinances took on a general character: they

were addressed to all portions of the realm; they dealt with varied matters; and in many cases they became impressive monuments of legislative achievement. At the same time Royal justice acquired a wholly novel position of supremacy: feudal, ecclesiastical, and municipal jurisdictions were subordinated, limited, or abolished; the ancient Parlement of Paris was strengthened and enlarged; and within the space of a few years numerous provincial Courts were constructed upon the same model, which carried the King's laws and the King's justice to the uttermost borders of the land. To further the work of law and justice, a centralized government was invoked. The King's orders were enforced by an efficient system of local administration, inspired and controlled by his Council and his Courts. Exceptional offices were abolished. Unusual powers were curtailed. Provincial peculiarities were discouraged. Municipal liberties were restricted. The ancient independence of the Church was diminished. The last strongholds of feudalism were made to totter before the advancing forces of the Crown.

Where the King's laws ran and the King's orders were executed, the King's taxes had to be paid; they were centralized, like the government; and the mainstay of the new fiscal system, the *taille*, was regulated by the requirements, not of the individual province in which it was raised, but of the country as a whole. Its proceeds, too, were applied to the maintenance of a standing army, which, like the *taille*, might be a menace to popular liberties, but was also a potent agent in the creation of national unity. 'The supersession of the feudal conception of the army by the monarchical was the triumph of the kingdom over the province and the fief, for between all the *bailliages* and *sénéchaussées* there was a consciousness of solidarity, whether for attack or defence. "Where one district is involved", it was said in 1356, "the others will aid and succour it"; and the States-General of 1484 emphatically asserted that "all Frenchmen, as brothers and as fellow-subjects, owe to each other mutual succour and help".'[1] Moreover, the systematic promotion of the nation's material interests added further strength to existing bonds. A comprehensive

[1] Dupont-Ferrier, *Officiers Royaux* (Paris, 1902), p. 763.

economic policy, founded upon a territorial basis, was devised; commercial intercourse was facilitated by the growth of security and the suppression of local barriers; the confusion of the currency was lessened; and a common standard in weights and measures, if not pursued as a practical possibility, was at any rate recognized as an ideal. Nor amid the general progress did territorial consolidation lag behind, for the feudal gaps in the countries of the King's obedience were filling up, and slowly but surely the kingdom was being extended towards its natural boundaries. Normandy and Guyenne had been recovered at the close of the English wars; Picardy and Burgundy were incorporated on the fall of Charles the Bold; La Marche and Armagnac were acquired by confiscation, Anjou, Maine, and Provence by devise; Brittany was shortly to be gained by marriage; and whilst the accession of one Prince would presently bring in Orleans and Blois, that of another would lead to the absorption of Valois and Angoulême. By virtue of these acquisitions territorial consolidation kept pace with political unification, and France stood upon the threshold of the new age a compact and populous kingdom, her provinces linked up, her littoral well-nigh completed, and her borders pushed forward in many directions to their natural limits in the mountains and the sea.

Considerable as was the progress made, however, its significance must not be overrated, for neither of the two main obstacles in the way of unity had been entirely removed as yet. If the forces of feudalism and provincialism had been weakened, they had not been extinguished, and the first favourable occasion might witness their restoration to vigorous life. The feudal principality continued to exist, deprived, indeed, of its ancient splendour, but still sustained by the system of land tenure from which it had sprung, and still so far formidable in the administrative, judicial, and fiscal spheres as to constitute a considerable evil. It might be true that the great feudatories had lost their old position of quasi-regal authority, but this was no great gain to the Crown so long as the social and political prestige which they retained made them the recognized leaders of the nobility, and the tradition of factious revolt which they inherited was but awaiting the occasions in

which a period of turmoil might still be fruitful. No less inimical to unity were the particularist spirit of the provinces, their desire for local autonomy, and the infinite diversity of their manners, customs, and institutions. The measure of the liberties of a province had usually been the degree of consideration which it had been able to exact at the time of its absorption by the Crown. In some districts, which were governed by the King's officials and were subject to the King's courts, all vestiges of the ancient freedom had disappeared. Others, favoured by circumstances, with their privileges guaranteed, were ruled by their own men, and possessed their own tribunals. Some were *pays d'état*, in which taxation was imposed and controlled by the local Estates. Others were *pays d'élection*, in which taxes were assessed by the central government, and were collected by its servants. Some districts enjoyed a total exemption from taxes on salt; some groaned under the full rigour of the *gabelle*; some paid it in a modified form. In one place customary law, in another the written code, prevailed; and the courts were no less diversified than the systems they administered, the *Conseil Éminent* of one province becoming the *Conseil Delphinal* in another, and the Exchequer of one district reappearing as the *Grands Jours* elsewhere. Administration likewise varied from place to place, in nomenclature, if not in attributes; here a *bailliage*, there a *sénéchaussée*; here a *vicomté*, there a *jugerie*, and there yet again a *viguerie*. Every province, moreover, liked to think of itself as an economic entity, whose frontiers should be defined by hostile tariff barriers; and the more enlightened policy of the Crown had to contend with a mass of selfish tradition and narrow commercial sentiment. If diversities so numerous and so considerable did not constitute an actual menace to unity, they were sore blemishes upon its perfection. Nor were they purely superficial. It is impossible to read at all deeply in the history of the time without being struck by the vigour of local life and the intensity of local feeling. As a modern historian has well said, 'every subject of the King was a Frenchman, but first he was a Norman, a Breton, a Burgundian, or a Provençal. All these little nations, though merged in the great nation, had preserved their character and manners, their

dialect or tongue, their traditions, and their customs. Though willing to unite, they were not willing to merge or confound their individualities '.[1]

National unity could not, then, be said to have attained its perfect development in the period with which my narrative deals, but despite some antagonistic influences it had achieved, and seemed likely to maintain, a sturdy growth. Closely akin to it was that gradual development of the power of the Crown which forms so remarkable a feature of the history of France during the later Middle Ages, and which was destined to affect for all time her customs, her institutions, and the character and fortunes of her people. No movement ever originated in circumstances which seemed so unpropitious to success. The Capetian dynasty, by which it was inaugurated, had been summoned as it were by accident to a throne tottering to its fall. Dukes of Paris, lords of the Ile-de-France, and acknowledged leaders among the nobles who were climbing to power on the ruins of the Carolingian Empire, the Capets had first achieved distinction by their success in repelling the Northern invaders, and during more than one feeble Carolingian reign they had upheld by their influence and their exertions the failing power of the throne. But when themselves invested with the Royal title which the old dynasty had been unable to defend, they found that its dimmed prestige added little to their authority. The titular monarch might be both a feudal suzerain and an anointed King, but neither as King nor as suzerain was he assisted, or obeyed, or feared. The great vassals, his peers in power if not in rank, levied taxes that were never paid into the Royal treasury, and raised armies that never served under the Royal banners ; they governed their fiefs without regard to Royal rights or interests, and in their own names and for their own purposes exercised the vital prerogatives of the Crown. Hemmed in by great independent fiefs, the sovereign had possessed no authority beyond his own narrow demesne lands, and even within them he could look for obedience only so far as he might be able to compel it. Restricted in area, and impoverished by lack of government, the demesne upon which he depended for all the

[1] Imbart de la Tour, *Origines de la Réforme*, vol. i, p. 31, Paris, 1905.

sinews of power had barely sufficed to meet the requirements of a frugal feudal Court.

Yet however gloomy its prospects may have seemed to be in a country dominated by feudalism and the Church, the Crown was possessed of sources of strength which arose in no small measure from the very social conditions that appeared to be most inimical to its progress. The rise of the Capetian House in France—a rise in many respects so astonishing—may be attributed primarily to the fact that it united to the moral authority of the old ecclesiastical tradition the temporal power of the newer feudalism ; it is as a feudal suzerain and an anointed monarch that the King emerges from obscurity, and as a territorial magnate and the delegate of a divine authority that he sets out upon his advance. Whilst the evolution of feudal theories invested the King with a peculiar moral authority as the universal landowner, the supreme overlord, and the keystone of the political arch, the prestige of Royalty was at the same time greatly enhanced by its extra-feudal and divine characteristics. As the successor of the Carolingian sovereigns, and as the heir through them of the majesty of Rome, the King ruled by a title carrying far greater moral weight than his claim to feudal suzerainty ; and the inherited splendour of the Imperial tradition relieved the darkness of the most sombre years. Arguing from the principles of Roman jurisprudence, legal writers alleged that the will of the Prince had the force of law ; the Church supported their teaching by proclaiming that no limits might be set to a power conferred by God ; and both were eagerly acclaimed by a people who saw in the progress of the Crown their one hope of deliverance from the incubus of feudal domination. Thus equipped, and thus supported, the monarchy went on from strength to strength, furthered in one generation after another by a rare sequence of men of genius, and drawing a new inspiration in each succeeding age. The feudal reactionary and the provincial patriot were as impotent to check its advance as to stay the stars in their courses or to arrest the flowing sea.

At the close of the fifteenth century the monarchy had reached a transitional stage which its historians are wont to describe as the epoch of limited government. Though the

system to which this description is applied may not altogether accord with those conceptions of constitutional rule which are familiar to the student of English political institutions, yet the fact remains that at the period in question the King of France occupied a position which, alike in his own estimation and in the eyes of his subjects, differed essentially from that of the irresponsible autocrat. No less perspicacious an observer than Machiavelli ascribed the strength of France 'to the obligations its Kings lie under to observe an infinity of laws, which effectually provide for the welfare of their subjects. By the fundamental constitutions of that realm the King may dispose of his armies and his finances as he pleases; but in all other things he is circumscribed by the laws'.[1] Ideas of the same kind were generally accepted by the political thought of the time, though no writer attempted the task, which the great Italian had evaded, of describing the constitutional machinery by which the sovereign was to be held in check. In the *Grant' Monarchie de France*, composed at the invitation of Francis I, Claude de Seyssel declared that 'the relations of head and members . . . are so well ordered that dissension and disagreement are well-nigh impossible. . . . And yet the Royal dignity and authority are left in their entirety, neither completely absolute, nor yet unreasonably limited, but regulated and restrained by good laws, statutes, and usages, which cannot be overthrown or ignored. . . . These checks upon the absolute power of the Crown are three in number, to wit, religion, justice, and the general body of constitutional law and practice.'[2] It is in vain, however, that we search Seyssel's pages for an answer to the problem which Machiavelli had left unsolved; nor do we find it in the book in which, at a somewhat later period, Seyssel's disciple, Loyseau, amplified his teaching. 'There are three kinds of laws', said this writer, 'which, without affecting the Crown, limit the power of the sovereign; to wit, the laws of God, to Whom he is subject, Prince though he be; the laws of natural justice, for it is . . . of the essence of public power that it should be used justly and not arbi-

[1] Machiavelli, *Political Discourses*, Bk. I, Ch. 16; Farneworth's trans., vol. iii, p. 70.

[2] C. de Seyssel *Grant' Monarchie*, Part I, Chs. 7 and 8.

trarily; and, lastly, the fundamental laws of the State, since the Prince must use his sovereign power according to its true nature and to the terms and conditions of its establishment.' [1]

Such passages as these reflect with fidelity the prevailing constitutional theories of the time, for circumstances had produced in the nation that equilibrium which Seyssel admired, and a contented country desired no better guarantees than it possessed. Yet there was a perilous fragility about these barriers with which a bastard constitutionalism aspired to stem the flood-tide of Royal progress, since the 'fundamental laws', upon the sanctity of which it relied, were protected by no efficient safeguards. If the sovereign were to overstep the bounds of moderation, there were no means by which public opinion could lawfully assert itself, or by which an effectual opposition could be offered to his pleasure. There were, indeed, political institutions, but they lacked opportunities for action; provincial assemblies were losing their importance, and the national Estates, having failed to acquire fiscal control, possessed neither permanence nor authority. Nor, where the Estates failed, could the law-courts hope to succeed, for the Parlements derived their powers from the King, and the quasi-political rights of remonstrance to which they laid claim were at the mercy of the prerogative, and might be extinguished by the *lettre de jussion* or the *lit de justice*. Social forces that once had been formidable were also losing ground: shorn of her ancient independence, the Church was becoming the plaything of Popes and Kings; and the old feudal aristocracy, with its proneness to turbulence, was about to be transformed into a Court nobility, existing upon Royal salaries and dependent upon Royal favours. Legal fictions, therefore, alone remained, and they were feeble checks upon a sovereign who was the source of legislation, the fountain of justice, the head of the executive, and the master of the legions and the purse. The very monarch to whom Seyssel's admonitions were addressed was soon to show that the barriers upon which his monitor relied were of no more avail before the voice of the King than were the walls of Jericho before the

[1] Loyseau, *Des Seigneuries*, Ch. 2.

trumpets of Joshua. Ten years after the composition of the *Grant' Monarchie* the Parlement of Paris made a significant avowal of its impotence when confronted with the prerogative of the Crown. 'Sire,' they told the King, 'it would be akin to sacrilege for us to doubt or question your power. We know full well that you are above the law, that ordinances and statutes affect you not, and that no power can constrain you to observe them.'[1] No doubt, if Seyssel could have listened to this address, he would have noted with indignation and dismay the spirit of subservience which it breathed. Little as he may have perceived it, however, his phantom constitution rested upon the quicksands of Royal self-restraint; and the limited monarchy he described was destined to be but a transient phase in the evolution of absolute power.

Nevertheless, strong as the Crown had become, it seemed not altogether unlikely that the slow progress of centuries would be wholly undone in the circumstances which arose on the death of Louis XI (30 August 1483). The dead King's only son,[2] who ascended the throne under the name of Charles VIII, was thirteen years of age; his health was indifferent; and as paternal anxieties or more selfish apprehensions had induced Louis to detain his heir in strict seclusion at Amboise, the young King's mind and character had not reached the limited degree of development which could alone have been looked for in a child of his years. Yet Charles was doomed to inherit along with his father's throne all the enmities which that father had provoked by a long career of successful cunning; and the prospect of domestic dissension was rendered doubly menacing by the likelihood of foreign attack. Such a policy as Louis had pursued does not tend to promote cordiality between Governments, and the relations of France with her neighbours were for the most part those of scarcely concealed enmity. In England a sentiment of hostility to France, fed on a century of strife, had passed into a national tradition; a French war remained the most popular of all policies in the eyes of a people which thirsted to renew former conquests and to avenge recent defeats; and,

[1] See Chéruel, *Histoire de l'Administration*, vol. i, pp. 329–30.

[2] See Genealogical Table I at the end of the volume.

weakened though the country now was by the evils of a disputed succession, the first favourable opportunity might witness her re-entry into the lists. On the Pyrenean border, meanwhile, a new peril was springing up with the unification of Spain; and it was certain that the resumption of her mortgaged provinces of Roussillon and Cerdagne would be one of the first objects to which the diplomacy, and, if need be, the arms, of the new power would be directed. The prospect on the eastern frontier was still more ominous. With the Swiss, indeed, who had lately revealed themselves as a military power of the first importance, Louis had established relations of sincere, if not altogether disinterested, friendship; but in other quarters the partition of the Burgundian dominions had aroused animosities of the fiercest kind. On the death of Charles the Bold his masterless provinces had presented an enticement which the cupidity of Louis was unable to resist, and by one means or another Picardy, Artois, Boulogne, Franche-Comté, and Burgundy had been brought under French rule. Not satisfied with these successes, the French King had also striven to seduce Flanders from its allegiance; but the Flemings, who preferred their own condition of turbulent insubordination to the centralized government and oppressive taxation of their neighbours, had turned a deaf ear to his cajoleries, whilst the discovery of his intrigues had thrown Mary, the heiress of Burgundy, into the arms of the Emperor's son. Mary was married to Maximilian in 1477, and died five years later, leaving two small children to inherit the dominions which she retained and her claims to those of which she had been despoiled. Reduced by his wife's death to the position of Regent for his children in a country which viewed him with suspicion as a foreign prince, Maximilian deemed it expedient to temporize, and came to terms with Louis. But the treaty of Arras,[1] by which the French conquests were expressly or tacitly accepted, offered no real solution of the questions at issue between the contracting parties. In destroying the Burgundian power, and annexing its fairest provinces to his kingdom, Louis had inflicted upon the heirs of Charles the Bold a wound which time could not heal. By Mary's

[1] 23 December 1482.

marriage those heirs were now irrevocably identified with the Austrian House; and since this House was about to combine the majesty of the Empire with the new-born might of Spain, its establishment in the Low Countries was an incalculable evil for France. The full measure of the menace was hidden in the womb of the future. Meanwhile one thing was certain; in the altered situation created by the death of Louis no treaty obligations could long avail to restrain Maximilian from seeking his revenge.

Whilst the new sovereign's Government would thus be confronted with serious dangers from abroad, the situation at home was full of perplexities and perils. The main cause for alarm lay in the disaffection of the feudal nobility, smarting under the humiliations of Louis' repressive policy, and sure to regard the troubles of a minority as an auspicious occasion for regaining lost ground. Though reduced in numbers and bereft of many old privileges, and though intensely unpopular with the great mass of the nation, these nobles might still prove formidable antagonists to a weak or embarrassed Government; and, habitually guilty as they were of subordinating the claims of patriotism to considerations of selfish advantage, they might well contrive to turn the scale against their country in a time of foreign war. A kind of primacy amongst them—it could not be called a leadership—had been thrust by circumstances upon Francis II, Duke of Brittany, whose position invested him with an importance to which he was scarcely entitled by his character or his abilities. Francis had aged prematurely and was in feeble health; his character was weak; his intellectual attainments were mediocre; and Providence had visited him with a crowning calamity in denying him a male heir. That his two young daughters [1] would be able to continue his rule, seemed in the highest degree improbable, and his death had been eagerly awaited at the French Court as the signal for effecting that annexation of the Duchy to France which the geographical position of the one, and the vital interests and instincts of the other, appeared to render an inevitable culmination. Against the prospect of such an issue, however, every true Breton heart rose in passionate indignation. Nowhere did the fire of

[1] See Genealogical Table II.

local feeling burn with so pure or so fierce a flame. Brittany possessed her own language, her own laws, and her own institutions; she had a history and traditions of her own, the outcome of centuries of freedom; she sent no representatives to the French Estates; she paid no taxes into the French treasury; her lawyers claimed independence of the French tribunals; and her churchmen, alleging a right to their own Papal Bulls, disputed every attempt at inclusion in the Gallican Church. French suzerainty, in a word, sat but lightly on Breton shoulders, and French interests weighed not at all in Breton hearts. Fanatically tenacious of his ancient independence, the Breton was instinctively the friend of every foe of France. Every French malcontent subject could count upon his sympathy; every political refugee who crossed his border was sure of an asylum; he was the ally of Burgundy, the friend of England, the confederate of Austria and Spain: and from Saint-Malo to Roscoff, from Brest to Nantes, his ports stood open to welcome every foe of France who might brave the perils of his iron coast.[1]

No other French Prince occupied a position in any way comparable with that of the Duke of Brittany, for no other fief possessed the peculiar characteristics of the Armorican province, and the other leaders of the feudal aristocracy depended for their influence upon personal qualities or advantages. The one amongst them best able to dispute the primacy of place with Francis was Louis, Duke of Orleans, the second cousin of Charles VIII, and the first Prince of the Blood. At this time Louis had scarcely attained his majority, and up to the present he had attracted attention rather by a career of extravagance and debauchery than by any manifestation of political talents. But however great the young man's weaknesses and follies, they may be explained, and are largely excused, by the peculiar features of the position in which he was placed. His grandfather, Louis, the brother of Charles VI,[2] had married Valentine

[1] 'Le recueil et reffuge des malveillans de nostre royaume et l'esperance de noz ennemys': Letter of Charles VIII to the Town of Lectoure, 30 March 1491, *Documents Historiques Inédits, Mélanges Historiques*, vol. iii, p. 513, and *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. P. Pélicier, vol. iii, p. 147.

[2] See Genealogical Table I.

Visconti, whose dowry had comprised money and jewellery to the value of half a million sterling, the counties of Vertus in Champagne and Asti in Piedmont, and a right of succession to the Duchy of Milan itself, should the male Visconti line become extinct. The dreamy temperament of the bridegroom had yielded to the spell of this splendid union, and, plunging into the vortex of international politics, he had pursued chimerical schemes of ambition in half the countries of Europe. Upon his death in 1407, murdered by his Burgundian rivals, adversity overtook his house: Asti was lost, his son Charles was taken prisoner in the English wars, and the great fortune, already partially squandered, was finally engulfed. Nor, even apart from the calamity of his captivity, was Charles the man to suffer profitably the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Like his father, he was a poet and an artist, whilst, unlike him, he lacked both aptitude and inclination for affairs; and literature, which for the father had been a recreation in prosperity, formed for the less happy son a solace in misfortune, to the exclusion of more active cares and pursuits. Charles died in 1465, leaving an only son, Louis, two and a half years old. Heir at once to the splendours and to the disasters of his House, reigning Duke from infancy, surrounded by flatterers, at enmity with the King, at variance with his mother, and deprived of a father's guidance, Louis had been nurtured in an evil school for the development of character. His eulogist, Seyssel, admits that he was 'in his young and flourishing age brought up in wantonness and lewdness'; and with greater candour he might have allowed that his paragon had dragged himself up in the gutter and the brothel. From early manhood Louis had thrown himself into a life of unbridled licence; 'widows, wives, courtesans, common prostitutes, all were fish for his net.'[1] It was to the young man's credit that he should have saved so much as he had from what might well have been the wreck of a career. Nature had endowed him with a ready wit, an open and receptive mind, a fine physique, and an iron constitution. At the age of sixteen

[1] De Maulde-la-Clavière, *Histoire de Louis XII*, Part I, vol. i (Paris, 1889), where will be found an interesting account, to which I am largely indebted, of the family history and childhood of Louis.

he had acquired the reputation of being the best jumper, the best wrestler, and the best tennis-player in the kingdom; the hardiest soldier of fortune envied him his powers of endurance; and the companions of his sports were at a loss whether to admire most his courage in the chase, his skill in the saddle, or his address in arms. In his character, too, there was much that was lovable; he was simple, gay, gracious, and affectionate; and the innate nobility of manner that marked the true patrician rendered doubly seductive his transparent eagerness to please.

A perception of his own true interests would have rallied Louis to the support of the throne which, if the sickly young King should die without leaving male issue, he would himself ascend; but he was burning under a sense of wrong which stifled the voice of reason, and ever at his side was his relative, the Count of Dunois,[1] an astute intriguer well qualified to warp the judgement of an inexperienced and impetuous youth. After the marriage of his parents, a period of sixteen years had elapsed during which no children had been born of the union, and the grim ogre of Plessis-les-Tours was already counting on the extinction of one of the feudal Houses which he so cordially detested when the unwelcome intelligence reached him that the Duchess of Orleans was about to give birth to a child. The infant proved to be a girl, but in due course her appearance was followed by that of a son. The Royal hopes thus unexpectedly shattered were soon revived, however, by the old King's craft. Whilst the hope of the House of Orleans was still in his cradle, a daughter, Jeanne, was born to the King himself; and before the truth could become known that poor Jeanne was weakly, infirm, mis-shapen, and perhaps a cripple, the children were affianced under Royal pressure. To this nefarious contract the young Duke had been pitilessly held, and in 1476 the bond had been finally thrust upon him, despite his childish repugnance, despite his mother's protests, and despite the righteous indignation of the public. The motives which had prompted the King to this outrageous step were obvious enough, without his own cynical admission of them; 'I am resolved',

[1] François, Comte de Dunois, was the son of Jean, who was the illegitimate son of Louis, Duc d' Orléans, brother of Charles VI.

he wrote to one of his confidants, 'to marry my little daughter Jeanne to the young Duke of Orleans, for the children to be born of that union will not, I fancy, prove any great expense to the happy couple.'[1] So long as the King lived, Orleans had no alternative but to submit; but he meant to extricate himself by seeking a divorce at the first opportunity that offered; and just resentment at the wrong inflicted upon him and his House, coupled with a firm resolve to repair it when he could, were operating to throw him into alliance with the forces of disloyalty and sedition.

In the centre of France another great feudal chieftain was to be found in the person of the Duke of Bourbon, whose enormous demesnes, which made him the richest nobleman in Christendom, would have constituted in themselves a kingdom of quite respectable dimensions. Unlike Brittany, however, they possessed no common sentiment and were held together by no common bond; and although they conferred upon their owner vast wealth, they invested him with no commensurate political power. The holder of the Dukedom, Jean II of Bourbon, was an old man, and never at any period of his career had he made proof of any sterling political qualities. His past record was a sorry patchwork of patriotism and pettiness, in which faithful service and the exhibition of considerable military gifts in the national cause had alternated with outbursts of insubordination and interludes of sullen discontent; and it was impossible to gauge with any certainty what his attitude would be towards the crisis that now seemed imminent. A man of his stamp might be led away by pique or vanity into courses which his judgement in calmer moments would deplore, and, should a time of trouble come, there would be no lack of counsellors to supply incitements to insubordination. But the Duke's younger brother, Pierre de

[1] 'Je me suis deliberé de faire le mariage de ma petite fille Jehanne et du petit duc d'Orléans, pour ce qu'il me semble que les enffans qu'ilz auront ensemble ne leur cousteront gueres à nourir, vous advertissant que j'espere faire ledit mariage, ou autrement ceulx qui yront au contraire ne seront jamais asseurez de la vie à mon royaume': Louis XI. au Grand Maître (Dammartin), 27 September 1473, *Lettres de Louis XI, Roi de France*, ed. J. Vaesen et E. Charavay, vol. x, p. 350. Compare Saint-Gelais, *Histoire de Louis XII* (ed. Th. Godefroy, Paris, 1622), p. 36.

Beaujeu, was the husband of the new King's sister; his part in the Government was to be a prominent one; and he might contrive to secure his old kinsman's neutrality, even if he did not succeed in enlisting his support. In the rest of France, and especially in the South and West, were many lesser fiefs, Montmorenci and Guise, Nemours and Nevers, Orange, Turenne, and Armagnac, Dunois at Longueville, Odet d'Aydie in Comminges, and the possessions of the house of d'Albret. Amongst the tenants of these fiefs were men who, though not individually formidable to the Crown, might have to be reckoned with when acting in concert with more powerful lords, and most of them might fairly be credited with the usual feudal propensity for fishing in troubled waters. By wealth and ability the most considerable amongst them was Alain d'Albret. At one time d'Albret had seemed likely to rank with the greatest of the feudal Princes, but now his power was on the wane; the Crown had done much since the expulsion of the English to curb the spirit of the turbulent South, and d'Albret's capacity for evil in France had been still further curtailed by his own entanglements in Navarre.

Had the feudal nobles been capable of any sustained combination, their influence would have been formidable in the highest degree; but the history of their past alliances was a paltry record of egotism and ineptitude, and in the last resort their strength would depend upon the measure of popular support which they might be able to enlist. It was one of the uncertainties of a dubious situation that the sympathies of the nation at large were hanging in the balance, and it was possible that the dislike of feudalism, deep though that was, might momentarily be outweighed by a still deeper dissatisfaction with the throne. The debt which France owed to her late sovereign was great; her policy directed by his cunning, she had beheld her humiliations turned into glories, her weakness converted into strength; but she had never learned to love the hand from which those benefits flowed. Louis had seemed to delight in parading the less engaging features of a character strangely compounded of inconsistent qualities; and, careless as to the methods he employed, he had contrived in the course of his reign to injure every interest and to offend every

class. I have already referred to the attitude of the feudal aristocracy, abased by a policy of persistent repression, and looking on in impotent wrath at the proscription of their leaders, the confiscation of their fiefs, the abrogation of their privileges, and the usurpation of their places by the baseborn creatures of a *bourgeois* Court. The Church had fared almost as ill; the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges,[1] the great charter of her liberties, had been set at naught, and her temporalities had been seized upon to provide rewards for Royal ministers or favourites. If the Parlement had owed to Louis the prestige which won respect for its decrees, it had found in him a master whose caprices were to be feared; its authority had been wounded by the transfer of its causes to the Grand Council or to extra-judicial commissions, the security of its magistracy had been menaced, and its importance had been curtailed by the establishment of numerous provincial tribunals. Since the towns had gained greatly by the extension of public security which Louis' firmness had produced, and since many of his most trusted servants had been drawn from the ranks of their citizens, municipal feeling might have been expected to show a more favourable disposition towards the Crown; but Louis had been far too shrewd to allow municipal independence to gain anything by the suppression of aristocratic privilege, and the towns were also annoyed by a commercial policy which had appeared to them unduly to favour foreign competition. Besides, the whole of the middle and lower classes had suffered grievously by an unexampled increase in the burden of taxation. Despite a personal parsimony pushed often to the verge of avarice, traditional notions of economy had been recklessly sacrificed by Louis to national necessities or Royal caprice. Dangers both domestic and foreign had necessitated the reconstruction of fortresses and the enrolment of a large mercenary army; and, after war had been prepared for at a huge cost, peace had often been procured by expedients nearly as ruinous. The establishment of an efficient civil service had also involved a heavy expenditure. Besides all this, shrines had been munificently endowed, favourites and servants

[1] Published by Charles VII on the 9th July 1438, and revoked by Louis XI on the 27th November 1461.

had been recklessly rewarded, and the demesne revenues, which confiscation and conquest ought to have augmented, had been reduced by perpetual largesses. The fiscal result had been disastrous. The *taille*, which had never amounted to more than 1,200,000 *livres* before Louis' accession, had grown with astonishing rapidity, and in the space of less than twenty years it had reached the stupendous total of 4,400,000 *livres* a year.[1] At this figure it formed, as may readily be supposed, a 'very excessive and cruel'[2] burden upon the resources of a country exhausted by a century of war. Yet it did not stand alone. Every weapon in the armoury of the Exchequer had been brandished in turn; heavy *aides* had been levied, the *gabelle* had been increased, industrial corporations had been mulcted, the *bourgeoisie* had been squeezed, and the clergy had been plundered. It will occasion no surprise that the memory of the rapacious monarch who had brought about these extortions should have been execrated among his impoverished and miserable subjects. Indeed, he was scarcely cold in his grave when a man who had held his judicial commission ventured to address to the representatives of the nation this uncompromising denunciation of his aims, methods, and achievements:

'You all know', said the Judge of Forez, the official orator of the Languedoil section in the States-General of 1484, 'you all know what the state of affairs recently was in King Louis' time: the Church degraded, her electoral rights ignored, her prizes awarded to the worthless, whilst her most saintly men were left in ignominious degradation; the nobility deprived of its due rewards, tormented by incessant demands for military service, defrauded of its privileges and rights; a Court infested by false witnesses and informers; a financial administration given over to rapacity and mismanagement; innocence actually punished instead of being rewarded, and guilt rewarded in proportion to its enormity. Was it an uncommon thing to see the innocent condemned without trial, and his possessions

[1] The approximate equivalents in modern money being £1,530,000, and £5,610,000 sterling: see Appendix, 'French Money', Table I.

[2] The adjectives are those employed by Commynes, *Memoires*, ed. de Mandrot, vol. ii, p. 43.

handed over to his accusers? Can any one have failed to perceive the King's reckless prodigality? He took, as he gave, aimlessly and thoughtlessly. As for the people, the reign of this cruel King was the cause of its being broken, well-nigh crushed altogether, beneath a huge burden of taxation.'[1]

There is much contemporary evidence to prove that at the time of Louis' death the condition of the country was, indeed, sombre in the extreme. For upwards of a hundred years France had been exposed to the untold horrors of a barbarous warfare in which the ravages of the foreign foes, of whom her soil was never quit, were scarcely more terrible than the depredations of her own unbridled soldiery; and such respites from war as the late reign had afforded had been neutralized by the intolerable fiscal burden. A sober English statesman, who knew the country well, had noted with a feeling akin to horror the degree of impoverishment to which war and taxation had reduced the people. Sir John Fortescue found the French peasantry subsisting on a diet of brown bread and water unvaried by a taste of meat unless it were the sodden refuse from the kitchens of the well-to-do; their scanty garments were of canvas, their legs were bare, and their feet unshod. So wasting in its effects was their arduous struggle to live that 'they have gone crokyd and ar feble, not able to fyght, nor to defend the Realme; nor have they wepon, nor monye to buy them wepon withal; but verily thay lyvyn in the most extreme Povertie and Miserye, and yet they dwellyn in one the most fertile Realme of the World'.[2] That the subsequent years of the reign witnessed no substantial amelioration in the condition of the people, is shown by the grim references to their plight which recur so frequently in the pages of the *Journal* in which Masselin recorded the history of the States-General of 1484. In district after district, so it was alleged, the incursions of English and Burgundian armies had dealt destruction far and wide, cattle and horses being

[1] Speech of the Juge de Forez, 21 February 1484, abridged: Masselin, *Journal des États Généraux de France tenus à Tours en 1484*, (ed. A. Bernier, *Collection de Documents Inédits sur l'Histoire de France*, First Series, Paris, 1835) pp. 354–7. Cf. Jean de Troyes, Coll. Michaud, vol. iv, p. 351.

[2] Fortescue's *Works*, ed. Lord Clermont, vol. i, pp. 451–2.

driven off, towns and villages being set on fire, and the inhabitants carried away into bondage. In regions to which the enemy had not penetrated the *gens-de-guerre* had taken up their quarters, and those heartless marauders were every whit as terrible to the people as any foreign foe. In the General Schedule of Remonstrances of the States-General, in which they are described, the miseries of the people are attributed in no small measure to the 'constant stream of *gens-d'armes* who live on the poor people, now *gens-d'armes d'ordonnance*, now nobles of the *ban*, now *francs archers*, and now the Swiss. . . . The poor labourer has to pay the man who beats him, who turns him out of his house, who robs and ruins him, and who, forsooth, is paid good wages for his protection. . . . When the unhappy peasant has toiled all day long, and by the sweat of his brow has reaped the fruit of his labour, whereto he looked for his sustenance, a part of it is taken from him and handed over to those who will probably beat him before the month is out, and seize the beasts which might have tilled the ground, to provide the soldier's pay. And when the poor labourer has with difficulty paid his *taille*, and has contrived, to his comfort, to keep a little something over, whereon to live during the rest of the year, and wherewith to sow his crops when spring returns, there comes along a sort of soldier who consumes and spoils this little that the poor wretch has saved. Nor is that all, for the man of war fares too delicately to be satisfied with a labourer's victuals, and so drives him off with blows to the nearest town, there to buy him white bread and wine, fish, spices, and other luxuries. Despair would long ago have overcome the poor, did not God comfort them and give them patience.'[1]

Pitiable as their condition was, however, the 'poor people' had found no pity with the Government, and the Schedule goes on to complain in vigorous language both of the intolerable burden of taxation and of the abuses,

[1] Masselin, *Journal*, pp. 672–3. Commynes speaks (Bk. V, Ch. 18) of the *gens-de-guerre* in much the same terms, alleging that by reason of their irregular pay 'notre royaulme . . . est plus pressé et persecuté de ce cas que nulle autre seigneurie que je congnoisse': *Mémoires*, ed. de Mandrot, vol. i, p. 443.

exactions, and rapacity of the revenue officials. Parishes, it asserted, which had been accustomed to assessments of 40 *livres* or 60 *livres* under Charles VII, were paying 1,000 *livres*[1] in the last year of his son's reign, and provinces which before had only paid thousands were then drained of millions. The effects were lamentable. For fear lest he should be arrested for some unpaid *taille*, if he were to show himself in the light of day, the labourer could work only by night; and for want of beasts, and of money to buy them with, he was constrained to harness his womenfolk and his children to the plough. So great had the scarcity become that the houses of the rich had to be protected by armed force, and the traveller must eat behind closed doors, if he would shield himself from the violence of ravenous mobs. Throughout the country he would meet with men as ghosts walking, their faces grim and dour, their bodies attenuated by suffering, hunger, and disease. Free men, envious of the bondservant, who at least was fed, might be seen gnawing substances that no stomach could digest, or pouncing greedily upon the garbage that the cattle rejected; whilst pitiful tales were told of men, haunted by the spectre of famine, who had put their wives and children to death, to rescue them from afflictions which they were powerless to avert. On the heels of famine had followed the plague: houses, churches, even the roads, were full of the dead and the dying; and in districts once populous, rich, and happy, scarcely a hundredth part of the former population remained. No life showed itself in the towns but the ill-omened activity of the brigand; the roads were blotted out; on the sites of smiling villages stood heaps of crumbling ruins, which the briar had already invaded; and the returning native might search in vain for the traces of his former home in a solitude now untenanted save by the owl and the boar. Such were the colours in which the representatives of France painted the condition of their country on the morrow of Louis XI's death. It is true that they were pleading for a remission of impositions, and that the taxpayer is not wont to make light of his misfortunes; but when every allowance has been made, it is difficult to question the truth of

[1] For actual and relative values of the *livre* see Appendix, Table I.

Fortescue's assertion that a realm as fertile as any in the world had been reduced to an extremity of exhaustion and misery.

Note. So far at all events as large parts of the country are concerned, there is plenty of contemporary evidence to corroborate the account given by the States-General. Commynes, for example, mentions how 'le duc de Bourgongne . . . fit mettre les feufz par tout ce quartier jusques aux portes de Dieppe. Il print le Neuf Chastel et le fit brusler et tout le pais de Caux et la pluspart jusques aux portes de Rouen'; *Mémoires*, ed. de Mandrot, vol. i, p. 246. From the Abbot of Savigny we learn that in the Lyons district the winter of 1481–2 was marked by a famine of peculiar severity; 'swarms of people, men, women, and children, died in the country districts; girls were constrained by hunger to sell their honour; and no aid could cope with the multitudes of starving people'; B. Maillard, *Chronique* (ed. Georges Guigue, Lyons, 1883), pp. 28–9 and 145–6. Another chronicler computed that, in addition to the usual decimation by war, famine, and pestilence, no less than 60,000 persons had emigrated from Burgundy during Louis XI's reign, whilst Franche-Comté was in great part deserted and covered with ruins. The Duchy of Burgundy was less miserable, but even there entire villages had been deserted, and the population of the towns had been seriously reduced. At Clermont in Auvergne it was asserted that 'to-day the streets are full of poor people who have died of hunger, and of the rest some are half dead, and some have been found gnawing their own flesh'; C. Rossignol, 'La Bourgogne sous Charles VIII', *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de Dijon*, Second Series, vol. iv (1856), pp. 123–4. Elsewhere we are told how in 1483 a deputation from Franche-Comté represented to the King 'the miserable and lamentable condition of the County, stripped of men, of towns, of villages', its University at Dole destroyed, its law-courts demolished, its Parlement idle for lack of inhabitants, its ruined solitudes given over to bands of robber Germans: Loys Gollut, *Mémoires Historiques de Franche-Comté*, new edit., 1846, col. 1405. The whole province was 'bathed in innocent tears, soaked with human blood, covered with ruins, utterly empty and deserted'; Gollut, *op. cit.*, col. 1329. Such had been the fate of Burgundy 'that there was not a place left standing in the *bailliages* of Amont and Dole, for they had been pillaged, burnt, and destroyed, and the country districts completely ravaged, bereft of inhabitants, and reduced to waste'; Gollut, *op. cit.*, col. 1405.

The Estates of Languedoc complained of the 'grands et extrêmes pauvretez dudit Pays, et depopulation d'iceluy, et aussi des tres-grandes, rigoureuses et excessives exécutions, en prenant le bestail du labeur aux Laboureurs, au defaut duquel, pource qu'ils n'avoient

autres biens, prenoient les personnes, et les mettoient en tresdures et aspres prisons, dont plusieurs sont morts en icelles, les meres et enfans par grande et extrême pauvreté, ont abandonné leurs lieux, mangeans les herbes et racines, et allans par les bois et montagnes, presque tous nuds, comme bestes, et finablement mourans par grande pauvreté et langueur. . . . La pluspart d'iceluy peuple est venu en telle extremité de pauvreté, que en delaissant toute honnesteté et crainte de Dieu les peres et meres ont abandonnées et faits prostituer leurs filles, et comme l'on dit d'autres, ont tué leurs femmes et enfans, et finablement se sont precipitez et mis en desesperance ; pource que à ce faire les contraignoit la grande famine. . . . Aussi, doit-l'on considerer les grandes et piteuses mortalitez qui ont esté et ont eu cours par diverses années audit Pays, qui sont venues à cause des grandes pauvretez, pource qu'ils n'avoient aucune substantation, au moyen desquelles la pluspart du peuple, qui estoit demeuré, est mort, et n'y est pas demeuré la tierce part du peuple et Habitants d'iceluy : ' Pierre de Caseneuve, *Le Franc-Alleu de la Province de Languedoc* (second edit., Toulouse, 1645), Appendix, ' Cahier des Doléances des États de Languedoc, 1484 ', p. 66.

The Estates of Dauphiné averred that the poverty and misery of their province baffled description : the *taille* had been quadrupled, the *gabelle* increased, and Royal dues on roads, rivers, and bridges multiplied and augmented ; and a revenue officer defended to Bourré his failure to collect what was expected of him by the ' good excuse he had in the poverty of the people, for their wretchedness and misery must be seen to be believed ' : G. Bricard, *Jean Bourré, Seigneur du Plessis, 1424–1506* (Paris, 1893), pp. 178–80.

In Artois the sufferings caused by the war were so acute that it was doubted if the people were in a position to bear any fiscal burden at all, and the revenue officers were ordered to hold an inquiry, to determine the extent of the damage inflicted upon the locality. Seeing that they were not likely to exaggerate its misfortunes, their report is grim enough. They found that out of a total of 3,850 houses, belonging to some 95 villages, 2,360 had been burnt ; in 10 villages, which had been completely destroyed three years before, not a single house had been rebuilt ; and 10 others possessed only 43 houses between them. Altogether, says the Report, ' about 150 villages have been burnt or destroyed ; the people have been carried away prisoners ; the whole of the cattle and movables has been taken ; by reason whereof the entire district has long been uninhabited ' : Louis Brésin, *Chroniques de Flandre et d'Artois*, ed. E. Mannier (Paris, 1880), pp. 269–70.

A Belgian chronicler, in his reflections upon Charles VIII's arbitral sentence of 1489, contrasted the condition of his fellow countrymen with that of the subjects of the French Crown. The Princes of the Low Countries, he said, had never suffered their subjects ' to be billeted, pillaged, taxed, preyed upon, oppressed,

gabelled, imposed upon, and exploited, like the poor people throughout the kingdom of France, who are treated like slaves, and have nothing they can call their own, for all they gain by toil or otherwise is the King's, who uses it, carves into it, and taxes it at pleasure; and whatever the pretences of the French to the Flemings, their one real object is to deceive and trick them out of their obedience to their Prince, to reduce them to a subjection, servitude, poverty, and necessity like to that of the said subjects of France; wherefor, if they are wise, they will keep aloof, for if they were to accept the French invitation—which God forbid—they would have such an experience as they had never had before': cited from a Brussels MS. by P. Pélicier, *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu* (Chartres, 1882), p. 277.

II

THE OPENING OF THE NEW REIGN

When Louis XI died on the 30th August 1483, Charles VIII was thirteen years and two months old; and by an ancient French statute it was provided that Royal heirs who should have attained their fourteenth year should have the government and administration of the kingdom.[1] This statute appeared to be capable of more than one interpretation. If it meant that a King attained his legal majority when he entered upon his fourteenth year, then Charles was legally of age, and no Regency would be required; but it was possible so to construe the ordinance as to postpone a sovereign's majority until he reached his fourteenth birthday, and from this occasion Charles was still removed by the space of nearly a year. In the following century, when the question arose upon the accession of Charles IX, the former interpretation was accepted; but in 1483 no binding precedent could be invoked for its determination, and out of the conflict of divergent opinions considerable confusion was to arise. From one point of view the problem was of no moment, since the young King, whether legally of age or no, was altogether incapable of personal rule; but from another it was of supreme consequence. Should the King be adjudged a minor, constitutional usage would place the reins of government in the hands of a Regent; by the same usage the Regency would belong to the first Prince of the Blood;[2] and this

[1] Ordinance of 1374, 'quartum decimum annum sue etatis attigerint': *Ordonnances des Roys de France de la Troisième Race*, vol. vi, p. 29; and see Isambert, *Recueil Général des Anciennes Lois Françaises*, vol. v, p. 421.

[2] *Cf.* Brantôme, *Œuvres*, vol. iv, p. 222–3: 'Le roy Henry mort, et le roy François II succédé à luy, M. de Guyze, comme oncle de la reyne, fut mieux que jamais en sa grandeur; car luy et M. le Cardinal son frère eurent toute la charge et gouvernement du royaume. . . . Ce ne fut pourtant sans de grandes envies et callumnies; car le roy de Navarre Anthoine, comme premier prince du sang, vouloit avoir ceste authorité. Cela fust esté bon si le roy fust esté pupil et mineur; mais il estoit adulte et majeure, et pour ce le roy estoit libre de choisir et tenir près de soy ceux qui bon luy sembloit.'

Prince was none other than the Duke of Orleans. But if the King were of age, and so deemed by constitutional theory to be *capax imperii*, the Regent would give way to a Guardian of the Royal Person, by whom the powers of Regent would in practice be wielded. For this post there were four claimants, the Queen-Mother, the Dukes of Bourbon and of Orleans, and the Seigneur de Beaujeu. Bourbon, who based his pretensions rather upon long public service and experience of affairs than upon any specific legal right, could not be reckoned, and did not perhaps aspire to be taken as, a serious competitor. A more formidable legal claim could be advanced by the Queen Mother, Charlotte of Savoy ; but, feeble in health [1] and weak in character, she had been rigorously excluded by Louis XI from all participation in affairs ; and if she now came forward as a claimant, it was mainly under pressure from her brother-in-law, the arch-intriguer, Dunois. The real struggle would therefore lie between Orleans, whose demand was advanced in virtue of his position as first Prince of the Blood, and the Beaujeus, who claimed in virtue of an express delegation from the dying Louis and also of their close relationship with the young sovereign. This question, together with that of the composition of the Council, through which the King and those who guided him must act, was to be the subject of hot debate during the coming months. Behind lay those other questions, whether the Crown or the Princes should rule, whether reaction or progress should prevail, whether the ordered policy of the late reign should be continued or feudal anarchy and greed should flourish once again in the land—questions of the first consequence for France, redeeming by their importance the sordid tale of treachery and intrigue upon which we are now to enter.

'The penultimate day of August 1483, the King, then on his death-bed, sent the Chancellor and all his suite . . . to carry the seals to the King, his son ; he sent him also some of the Archers of the Guard and Captains, and all his hunting and hawking establishments ; and all who came to visit him he sent on to Amboise to the King—for so he called him—praying them to serve him faithfully ; and by each of them he sent some message. . . . On September 2,

[1] She died on the 1st December 1483.

news was brought to the Court of Parlement by M. Jean de la Rivière that on Saturday, the last day but one of August, our sovereign lord the King Louis, of that name the eleventh, had fallen asleep in the Lord . . . and Mm. Jean de la Vacquerie and Jean d'Armes were chosen to go before King Charles, to make obeisance, and to pray that it might please him to confirm in their offices the Presidents, Councillors, Recorders, Notaries, and other officers of the said Courts.'[1] The lawyers were not alone in their eagerness to wait upon the new sovereign, for the whole country was in commotion, as soon as the tidings of Louis' death became known, and the Princes and their satellites came flocking to the Court, like vultures scenting from afar the fallen lion. Some of them had not waited even so long to take the precautions which their interests seemed to demand. On the 26th August the Duke of Brittany had written to his envoy in England, instructing him to negotiate with Richard III for active measures against France immediately upon hearing of her King's death ; and he had also taken the first steps in that treasonable correspondence with the Duke of Orleans which was to end in disaster for them both. Orleans, aided by the Abbess of Fontevrault, his sister, smuggled an emissary into Brittany whose mission was to declare his master's affection for Francis and his desire for close co-operation in the aims which both were about to pursue : the Duke of Orleans, the messenger was to say, 'had more faith in the aid, support, and favour of the Duke of Brittany than in those of any other Prince',[2] and would immediately divorce the King's sister, if he might thereby secure the hand of the Breton heiress. Persons of humbler station than the Dukes were also active, though they contented themselves with less adventurous courses, trimming their sails as best they could to a shifting and uncertain wind. Pierre de Rohan, Marshal de Gié, who had served with distinction in the war against Maximilian, Georges d'Amboise, Bishop of Montauban, one of the late King's Almoners, and Philippe de Commynes, the historian, his confidant, coquetted with the Orleanist party. Louis Malet de Graville maintained an attitude which upon the

[1] Duchesne, *Hist. des Chanceliers* (Paris, 1680), p. 524.
[2] De Maulde, *Louis XII*, Part I, vol. ii, pp. 42–3.

whole was decorous, though he deserted his late master's cause so far as to sanction the arrest of Olivier le Daim, the notorious instrument of his extortions. Doubtful as to the course which events would take, and thinking discretion the better part of valour, Imbert de Batarnay, Sieur du Bouchage, slipped away from Amboise to the less agitated, and less agitating, atmosphere of his estates, there to await in prudent neutrality the upshot of the three-cornered duel which was beginning between the Queen-Mother, the Princes, and the party of the late sovereign. It was with the last of these that his sympathies lay, but its prospects cannot have seemed to him to be very bright, unless, perhaps, with his native shrewdness he had detected in its ranks the presence of one who was to reveal herself as amongst the most remarkable personalities of the age.

Anne de Beaujeu, or Madame, to give her the name by which she was commonly known to her contemporaries, was the eldest child of Louis XI, and was now twenty-two years old. Her father had said of her that she was the least foolish member of a sex which contained no wise ones, and his cynical tribute did her less than justice. In her the dead King's spirit was reincarnate in a nobler form: she was, says Brantôme, reproducing in a flash of illumination the tradition of a family which had known her well, she was 'fine femme et delliée, s'il en fust onq', et vray image en tout du roy Loys son père'.[1] But if the dead monarch's qualities lived again in the daughter, they did so purged of his defects, and untainted by the cruelty, the hypocrisy, and the cunning which had made his greatness so little admirable. Like him, she loved authority, but she tempered it with a tact and gentleness of which Louis XI had given never a proof; she used power as not abusing it; her firmness never degenerated into harshness; and her noble courage in the hour of peril was fitly matched by her magnanimous forbearance in the day of triumph. With all her father's energy and with all his obstinate determination she combined a deftness not inferior to his in the statesman's art of seducing or dividing her enemies; she was greatly his superior in the sound, practical sense, which,

[1] Brantôme, *Œuvres*, ed. L. Lalanne for the Société de l'Histoire de France, vol viii, p. 99.

when the choice is open, will select the straight in preference to the crooked path; and, supple enough when a crisis called for pliancy, she would never stoop to dissimulation where a frank honesty might prevail. Prompt in decision and rapid in action, she could strike with an eagle's pounce, but she never missed her quarry by precipitancy, or struck too soon. Patience, she told her brother, is the road to knowledge.[1] None but a wayfarer on that arduous path could have indited the *Enseignements à Sa Fille Suzanne*, in which she stored the fruits which her ripe intelligence had gathered from a tolerant survey of mankind. The *Enseignements* were composed between the death of Pierre de Beaujeu in 1503 and the marriage of Suzanne in 1505. They constitute the author's 'moral and intellectual testament, the final word of her wisdom, the *résumé* of her experience';[2] and the portrait of the ideal Princess which she painted for her daughter's guidance set forth the pattern to which in her own life she had striven to conform. Suzanne is bidden to keep ever before her eyes the obligations, as well as the privileges, of her Royal rank; duty must be performed, regardless of the cost; and prudence, modesty, and courtesy must be her beacon lights. So, and only so, will she attain to the stature of the perfect woman, who is 'toujours en port honnorable, en manière froide et asseurée, humble regard, basse parolle, constante et ferme, toujours en ung propoz, sans fléchir'. The modesty which is to mark her manner should also be apparent in her dress; Suzanne is reminded that extremes of fashion are always tinged by eccentricity or affectation; and Madame's own preference for sober colours and her contempt of finery are manifest in her condemnation of 'outrageously skimpy and indecent garments'[3] and in her scornful derision of the foolish women who 'think to add to their charms by a scantiness of attire from which in winter they perish of cold and grow sallow and discoloured, . . . a sinful, because a suicidal, folly'.[4]

[1] La Mure, *Histoire des Ducs de Bourbon*, (ed. from a manuscript of 1675, with documents and notes, by R. Chantelauze), vol. iii, p. 217.

[2] Chazaud, *Les Enseignements d'Anne de France à sa fille Suzanne*, p. xxxii.

[3] 'Les plus oultrageux, trop estroits, ne fort chéans': *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[4] 'Ung merveilleux péché, car on est homicide de soy mesmes': *Ibid.*, pp. 27–8.

Such vanities would, indeed, have harmonized ill enough with the austerity of Anne's own character; with her virile features, resolute manner, and calm and fearless gaze, she might rely upon a beauty that needed not to be adorned; nor could any adventitious aid have heightened the impression which her stately presence produced. Upon her poor little brother, the King, that presence was magical in its effect. It was with a deference that was almost timorous that he looked up to the majestic sister, so much his senior in years, so greatly his superior in qualities of mind and character, whose impassive gravity awed him, and whose cold reproof was quick to chill his childish ardours. Anne knew her power; she knew, too, that upon the preservation of it would depend the accomplishment of the work which now lay before her to do; and, herself a stranger to childhood's gaiety in the loveless gloom of Plessis-les-Tours, she would not jeopardize that work's success by any relaxation of her stern control. During the banquet which followed Charles' coronation ceremony, 'Madame de Beaujeu came through the Chapel door, and entered the hall, to see how the King was behaving himself.'[1] Even in the first flush of his new-born greatness the boy was powerless to resist the spell, and at sight of his sister he fell straightway into a half-frightened silence, the laughter stilled upon his lips, and the sweetmeats left untasted before him. 'Madame de Beaujeu, your sister,' Orleans told him, 'wants to keep you in leading-strings and to have rule over you and your kingdom.' The ambitious Duke resented the influence, and he did so with reason. It was well for the French Crown that in this its hour of peril so able a champion should have been raised up for its protection in the person of Anne de France.

It was close upon ten years since Anne had become the wife of Pierre de Bourbon, Sire de Beaujeu. The fourth son of Charles, Duke of Bourbon, by his marriage with Agnes, daughter of the Duke of Burgundy, and the protégé and favourite of his aunt, the Duchess of Orleans, in whose household he had been brought up, Beaujeu had grown to manhood in an atmosphere of antipathy to the Crown;

[1] 'Mémoires de Jean Foulquart, Procureur de l'Échevinage à Reims,' published in the *Revue de Champagne et de Brie*, vol. ii, p. 139, Paris, 1877.

and throwing in his lot with the Princes upon his first introduction to public affairs, he had signed the manifesto of the Duke of Berri and taken part in the Ligue du Bien Public. In 1465, however, the King had offered him the hand of his elder daughter, Anne, and the bait was too alluring to be rejected by a penniless cadet of the Bourbon House. For a daughter of France, indeed, the match might seem to be somewhat tame, but Louis was not accustomed to purchase support above its worth, and he was well satisfied with his project upon a calculation of the balance of advantage. Shrewd judge of character as he was, the King had recognized in his prospective son-in-law a man of solid worth; and apart from the energy and capacity which it would enlist in the service of the Crown the marriage offered the prospect of other gains, remote, perhaps, but none the less worthy of some present sacrifice. Of Pierre's elder brothers, one, the Duke of Bourbon, was old and childless, and the other was a Churchman;[1] Pierre was therefore heir presumptive to the vast possessions of the House; and, if his destined marriage with Mary of Orleans should take place, he might one day combine with those possessions another great inheritance. This engagement his marriage with Anne would cancel, and of the few great feudal Houses which were still a danger to the throne the wealthiest would be rendered innocuous, and perhaps absorbed. An unusual outflow of Royal munificence accompanied the marriage, and the family of the bridegroom was required to play its part, the Duke of Bourbon ceding to his brother, with what grace he might, Beaujolais and Dombes, the county of Clermont-en-Beauvaisis, and the seigneury of Beaujeu. Bourbon professed to make the surrender cheerfully, in consideration of his natural love and affection for Beaujeu, 'and more especially of the honour which our redoutable sovereign lord, the King, has been pleased to confer upon us, upon our said brother, and upon our whole House in bestowing on our said brother the hand of the said lady, his daughter, Anne de France'. The outward profession was decorous. In private, however, the angry Duke made no secret of his conviction that the honour was too dearly bought. 'We have made a reason-

[1] The third had died.

able provision for him,' he complained, 'with which he ought to have been content, in view of the number of our brothers and sisters, their dowries and marriage-portions, and our other expenses; but we understand that the King, our brother's father-in-law, intends to intervene and constrain us.'[1] Repaying his benefactor with loyal and capable service, Beaujeu secured a further portion of the bounties which Louis never denied to those who merited his favour. Governor of Languedoc in 1481, Beaujeu in the following year became Lieutenant-Governor of the kingdom, when 'the King told the Dauphin to obey him, and to do all that he ordered, as though it were himself who commanded him'; [2] and it was to the Beaujeus again that Louis turned on his death-bed, to watch over the fortunes of his infant son, and to shape the destinies of France.

It is the fashion to ascribe to Brantôme's panegyric of Anne de Beaujeu, and thus to discredit, the popular tradition which assigns to her rather than to her husband the responsibility for the government during Charles VIII's minority; but it may be questioned whether the traditional view, whatever its origin, is not substantially correct. Beaujeu, it is true, was a trusted servant of the Crown, whilst Anne was an inexperienced girl, and since it was always he, and not Anne, who presided over the Council, it was seemingly by his hands, not hers, that the instrument of government was wielded. Contemporary critics, however, whether friendly or hostile, are agreed in attributing to Anne de Beaujeu qualities of mind and character which endowed her with an ample capacity for the task of personal rule, whilst her husband reveals himself as a man steady and sure, indeed, but unimaginative and without originality, whose ability was of the sort which can execute a policy but does not initiate it, which can obey but does not command. Claude de Seyssel describes him as 'a man of peace and good will, kind, upright, and straightforward'; [3] and an historian of his House, whilst admiring his sound intelligence, his strong common sense, and a capacity

[1] La Mure, *Histoire des Ducs de Bourbon*, vol. iii, pp. 207–10.

[2] J. de Troyes, *Chroniques*, in Michaud and Poujoulat's *Collection*, Series I, vol. iv, p. 345.

[3] Claude de Seyssel, *Histoire Singulière du Roy Loys XII*, Paris, 1558, fo. 39.

enlarged by long experience of affairs, yet credits him ' with a character in which gentleness and complaisance were pushed to the point of feebleness '.[1] If such estimates of the moral traits of Beaujeu approximate even remotely to the truth, there will be no misconception of the nature of his partnership with the imperious daughter of Louis XI. If he, and not Anne, presided over the Council, it was because Anne in her prudence ' took as much trouble to disguise her power as others take to parade theirs '.[2] There is nothing in the inherent probabilities of the situation, and nothing in the testimony of contemporary authorities,[3] if I interpret them aright, to subvert the traditional view which assigns to Anne de Beaujeu the controlling voice in the counsels of the Government.

Established from the outset by the young King's side at Amboise, in favour with his guards, and supported by the whole personnel of Louis XI's Government, the Beaujeus would enter on the struggle for power with appreciable advantages. None the less it would need all their skill to regularize the anomalous position in which the death of Louis had placed them. Their claims were based, it is true, upon the injunctions of the dying King, but no foundation could be less secure : not only was his memory execrated, but his attempt to dispose of his successor's person was a defiance of every constitutional maxim ; and even if his legal authority were allowed, to exercise it by a mere verbal delegation seemed to be wholly inadequate. An assumption of power in such circumstances must have appeared to be of very doubtful validity ; and Anne was painfully aware that the hostility of the Queen-Mother and of the Princes would be rendered doubly dangerous by the general spirit of discontent which many and real grievances had produced in the nation at large. She judged, therefore, that the ship could not weather the storm, if the full cargo were retained ; the load must be partly jettisoned, in the hope that something might perhaps be salved when the stress should be past, and the vessel should again ride safely in untroubled waters. But it was easier to determine

[1] La Mure, *Histoire des Ducs de Bourbon*, vol. ii, p. 295, note.
[2] Michelet, *Histoire de France*, vol. ix, p. 134.
[3] See note at end of chapter.

upon a policy of sacrifice than to settle the exact method by which it might best be carried out. Action and inaction were alike fraught with peril. To continue Louis' policy, and to retain his servants, as he had enjoined, would best promote the interests of the Crown; but such a course would exasperate the Princes, and would not conciliate the sympathies of the people. To admit the Princes to a share in the government was a ready means of conjuring away the most immediate peril; but it would revive the very evil which the Crown had striven so long to eradicate, whilst a restoration of political influence to the feudal nobility would deprive the Beaujeus of all support among the middle and lower classes. The grievances of those classes were connected chiefly with the fiscal burden, but while a sweeping remission of taxes could be counted on to produce an outburst of popular enthusiasm, a depleted exchequer could not then support the cost of the military organization by which alone the country could be made secure against its many foreign foes. In a word, a policy of concessions and of conciliation seemed to be essential; yet no direction could be discerned in which the smallest tendency towards reaction could prudently be tolerated.

The perplexing conjuncture was handled by Madame with a remarkable combination of tact, judgement, and foresight. The nobles who came flocking to Amboise, and who could not be sent away, were received with every appearance of cordiality; the *château* was thrown open to them; and it was already so full when Orleans and Angoulême arrived upon the scene that they were obliged to take up their quarters in the town. Conciliatory letters were addressed to the 'good towns'—so often the stay of an unstable throne—and their privileges were confirmed.[1] The more flagrant manifestations of the late monarch's improvidence were condemned by an ordinance revoking *en bloc* all the acts by which the demesne had been alienated during his reign, and by a direction to the Courts that no new conveyance should be registered. Considerable reductions were also made in the military establishment, and the Swiss mercenaries, whose presence was resented as a slur upon

[1] *E.g.* the letter to the town of Troyes, *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. P. Pélicier, vol. i, pp. 1–2.

the nation's manhood, were disbanded. As a consequence of these measures some fiscal concessions became possible, and the *taille* leviable in the country districts was lessened by a quarter. At the same time the most conspicuous injustices of the late reign were redressed, and those who had suffered by them were compensated or restored. The Count of Perche issued from his iron cage to enter into possession of the Alençon inheritance; their patrimony was restored to the children of the Duke of Nemours; and the La Trémoille family, despoiled to enrich Commynes, were allowed to submit their claims to the decision of an impartial court. Political refugees were also remembered: the sentence of banishment pronounced against the Prince of Orange was annulled; and in their appointments as Grand Écuyer of France and Perpetual Mayor of Bordeaux respectively, Pierre d'Urfé and Poncet de la Rivière received a recompense for lean years of exile relieved by the charity of the Breton Court. Besides these measures, which aimed at appeasing the nobles, another was announced which might, it was hoped, prove gratifying both to the Parlement of Paris and to the Gallican Church. Twenty years before, the Procureur-Général, Jean de Saint-Romain, had dared to lodge a remonstrance in favour of the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges, and had paid for his temerity in instant dismissal from his office: the arbitrary deprivation was now quashed, and Saint-Romain entered once again into possession of the office of which he had been illegally deprived. At the same time the other members of the Parlement were confirmed in their offices, and the deputation which had waited upon the King at Amboise came back with satisfactory assurances of Madame's intentions. The precepts of King Louis, and not his practices, were to be followed; abuses of judicial procedure were to be abolished, sales of judicial offices were to be prohibited, the laws were to be respected, justice was to reign, the guilty were to be punished, and a shower of blessings was to be outpoured by a beneficent Government upon a parched and thirsty land.

The liberation of prisoners, the recall of exiles, remission of taxes, promises and part performance of reforms, these things might win a measure of support for the new Govern-

ment, but it remained to satisfy, if satisfaction might be possible, the greed and ambition of the Princes. Some of them, as has been seen, had received their compensations. Others, so Anne determined, might safely be ignored, either as being too young for political ambition or as being too old for political action. The heads of the princely faction, however, were still to be accounted for. They were bought off by concessions nicely calculated to their several characters and desires. The least important, Dunois, was appeased at the smallest cost ; but even he received a Privy Councillorship, a company of 100 ' lances ',[1] a yearly grant of close upon 4,000 ducats, and the Governorship of Dauphiné (13 November). The Duke of Orleans secured the Presidency of the Council, the Governorship of Paris, the Ile-de-France, Champagne, and Brie, a company of 100 ' lances ', a grant of *gabelles* and judicial profits in his demesnes, and emoluments amounting to 44,000 *livres*[2] a year (23 October). One dazzling prize remained in Anne's gift ; it was destined for the Duke of Bourbon. The post of Constable, the first of all the great offices of State, which had never been filled since the treason of Saint-Pol in 1475, had long been coveted by Bourbon, who considered himself to be marked out for it by his birth, his experience, his military renown, and a long record of service to the State. The old man's ambition was now at length to be gratified, and the ordinance which conferred the office upon him (23 October) rehearsed his qualifications in terms of unstinted eulogy. At the same time the resources of French diplomacy were employed to secure Papal favours for his kinsmen and retainers ;[3] and along with the Constable's sword he himself recovered the Lieutenant-Governorship of Languedoc, of which Louis

[1] The ' lance fournie ' at this period consisted of five men, namely, a man-at-arms, two archers, a *coutilier* or squire, and a page. Like the Colonelcy-in-chief of a modern regiment, the command of a company of 100 lances was an honour bestowed upon persons distinguished by high birth or conspicuous public service.

[2] Equivalent to about £56,000 a year in modern money ; see Appendix, Table I.

[3] The bishopric of Liège requested for the Cardinal of Bourbon, and that of Orange for the Duke's confessor, Pierre Carré : *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. P. Pélicier, vol. i, pp. 15–18.

had deprived him, whilst receiving a further commission as Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom.

Great as were these concessions, the Beaujeus were constrained to make yet a further sacrifice to princely resentment, to judicial spleen, and to popular anger. A solemn promise had been given by Charles that his father's servants should be maintained in their posts, and this undertaking Madame would gladly have observed. But revenge upon those who had been the recipients of the tyrant's favours was an object still dearer to the hearts of his subjects than the restoration of those who had suffered by his malevolence. Were she openly to espouse their cause, Anne herself would become suspect to the nation, and prudence required that she should wait upon events, in the hope that, when the storm should break, it might be possible to moderate its violence.

Four men in particular were marked out by popular hatred for severe treatment, of whom one, happily for himself, was beyond the reach of retribution. The others were Olivier le Daim, Jean de Doyat, and Jacques Coictier.

The last mentioned of these, who had been the least prominent, escaped the most lightly. Coictier had been the King's physician, and to his extraordinary influence over his patient he had owed a rise to wealth and official dignity unexampled in its rapidity. A Clerk in the Chambre des Comptes in 1476, he was a Vice-President in 1477, and had become First President in 1483 ; in the same year he was made Concierge of the Royal Palace ; and in less than two years he had acquired the seigneuries or seigneurial rights of Rouvres, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Poissy, Poligny, Brazay, and Saint-Jean-de-Losne.[1] His fall was now as speedy : his seigneuries were taken from him by the decree which rescinded Louis' gifts, and his official appointments, which terminated with the King's life, were not renewed.

To rob the upstart of his spoils might satisfy the Princes in the case of Coictier, to whom it could at all events be imputed for righteousness that he had failed to preserve his master's life. Sterner measures were demanded against Jean de Doyat, who had aided that master to rule. A strange

[1] A. Chéreau, *Jacques Coitier, Médecin de Louis XI, Roi de France*, Société des Sciences et Arts de Poligny, 1861.

freak of fortune had been the making of Doyat's career. The troubles of the Ligue du Bien Public had found him a young law-student on the threshold of a civil career, but at the sound of battle he had resolved to change the barrister's robe for the soldier's coat, and had enlisted in the Royal Army. There he had served with energy and with some distinction, until one day trouble had met him upon the road in the shape of a German doctor's wife; the lady was 'moult gracieux, belle et parée'; and Doyat, succumbing to her charms, had incontinently run off with her. *Gens-de-guerre* were wont to defy the law too often for a nation's happiness, but Justice sometimes contrived to come by its own. It did so in the case of the fair German's seducer. Fined two hundred gold *écus*[1] and condemned to death, Doyat had managed to escape, and had taken refuge in Burgundian territory. There he had been brought to the notice of Louis; and Louis, never squeamish about the moral characteristics of his servants, had detected in him the qualities which he admired and political opinions according well with his own. Bailli of Cusset in 1477 and within three years a Chamberlain, a Privy Councillor, and Governor of Auvergne, Doyat had justified the confidence which had been reposed in him; Louis had possessed no more capable or devoted servant; and his skilful and considerate administration had restored to Auvergne a commercial prosperity and material comfort to which it had long been strange.

In the course of this administration Doyat had come into conflict with the noble oppressors of the district, the Duke of Bourbon, its temporal lord, and his brother, the pluralist Cardinal, who, besides being Archbishop of Lyons, also occupied the see of Clermont. After an inquiry, instigated and conducted by himself, into the Duke's 'usurpations and enterprises against the Royal authority', Doyat had re-established in Auvergne that supremacy of Royal justice without which his policy of social amelioration could never have been carried out. He had then turned his attention to the City of Clermont, and by securing for it a charter of independence he had rid it of the abuses of ecclesiastical

[1] The *écu* at this time was worth in *monnaie tournois* 1*l.* 13*s.* 0*d.*, and was equivalent to two guineas in modern money: see Appendix, Table II, Part I.

jurisdiction. The King's death now left him defenceless to reckon with the wrath of the princely House which he had ventured both to injure and to insult. In May 1484, by Bourbon's orders, he was arrested and thrown into prison upon charges of misgovernment, corruption, extortion, usurpation of the Royal prerogatives, and interference with the course of law. The Parlement, to which he appealed, instituted inquiries in the districts which he had governed, inviting evidence which might incriminate the prisoner. In Bourbonnais there came forward a few witnesses suspected of being suborned by the Duke: in Clermont not a voice was raised. But the Court, which saw in the prisoner at its bar the executor of a policy which it hated and the colleague of men whom it abhorred, had no need of witnesses; and despite the substantial innocence of Doyat, whose true crime consisted in fearless service of the State, and despite the skill and pertinacity of his defence, the trial dragged slowly on to its inevitable conclusion. The sentence, when at length it was pronounced (30 June 1485), displayed a full measure of the hideous ferocity which characterized the criminal law of the period. A decree of civil degradation pronounced against him, his goods forfeited, and condemned to banishment from the realm, Doyat was sentenced to savage scourgings and mutilations, and these were to be inflicted, not only in Paris, but also again at Montferrand, so that the upstart enemy of Princes might pay the penalty in public abasement upon the theatre of his former greatness. His family, too, which had participated in his prosperity, was made to share in his misfortunes. One of his brothers, the Bishop of Saint-Flour, was deprived of his see; the temporalities of his abbey were wrested from another; a third was fined 4,000 *livres*; and the fourth perished in a brawl for which the Duke of Bourbon was believed to be accountable. Jean himself survived his martyrdom, to render yet one more service to the country which had so ill deserved to profit by his patriotism. When the French Army set out for Italy in 1494, no one in its ranks could devise a means by which the heavy ordnance could be transported across the Alps, until Doyat, an old pupil of the Bureau brothers, came forward to solve the problem, with the result that the

artillery was carried over the mountains without the loss of a single gun. It was, however, in a succeeding age that France was to recall with contrition the name of Jean de Doyat, when the rebellion of the Constable of Bourbon should furnish at once his justification and his revenge.[1]

Far other were the character and antecedents of Olivier le Daim, Count of Meulan. Among the many scandals of the late reign none had been more flagrant than the meteoric rise of the Flemish barber who had insinuated himself into the confidence of the King and become the executor of his more vile behests. Olivier, whose rank was the reward of public villainy, while his wealth was largely the outcome of private extortion, was now to answer for his misdeeds before that Justice which he had so long insulted and defied. Pursued as he was by the maledictions of a nation, there was to be no such lack of evidence as had embarrassed the Parlement in the proceedings against Jean de Doyat. A crowd of accusers, drawn from every class, besieged the Palais-Royal on the news of his arrest, and in every district with which he had been connected a stern demand for vengeance arose. From Paris, where he had lived; from Tournai, which he had visited on an official mission; from the Seine valley, where he owned estates; from Saint-Cloud and Saint-Denis, where he had wielded power; from every quarter which had been exposed to his sinister activity, came in the same tales of violence and wrong. The Bishop of Noyon had been plundered, to gratify Olivier's hatred; Thomas Basin, Bishop of Lisieux, the faithful servant of Charles VII, had incurred the pains of banishment and forfeiture, to appease his greed; the Bishop of Nevers had been robbed of his gold plate; the Abbey of Saint-Denis, its lands handed over to Olivier to farm, had been pillaged to the tune of 7,000 or 8,000 *livres* a year; churches had lost their illuminated missals; merchants had been eased of their Turkey carpets; travellers had been held up and made to deliver; and the Parlement of Paris itself had been flouted in the person of one of its magistrates.

[1] My account of Doyat is based largely upon Agénor Bardoux's article, 'Les Grands Baillis au Quinzième Siècle: Jean de Doyat,' in the *Revue Historique de Droit Français et Étranger*, vol. ix, pp. 5–44; Paris, 1863.

The story of Martin de Bellefaye, as unfolded in the criminal records of the Court,[1] affords striking evidence of the manner in which the agents of despotism had been permitted to trample upon popular liberties and rights. As Captain of the Bridge of Saint-Cloud, Olivier le Daim with the aid of his lieutenant, Daniel Bart, had long subjected that town to systematic extortion, imprisoning, fining, and maltreating all who had the temerity to resist his usurpations. So intolerable had the burden become that the town had at length been constrained to appeal for protection to the Bishop of Paris, within whose jurisdiction it lay; and the Bishop, obtaining an order against Bart, had sent Jean Gaignan, a graduate and barrister-at-law, to serve it on him. Olivier's agent was not the man to submit meekly to a restraint upon his arbitrary proceedings. Springing from his seat in an access of fury, he had 'seized the said Gaignan, thrust upon him an iron collar from which a very heavy chain was suspended, and left him thus incarcerated throughout the night'.[2] On the morrow Gaignan's master had learnt the fate which had befallen his emissary; and the Parlement, having been acquainted with the outrage, had instructed its officers 'to go in search of Gaignan, and to bring him back in the condition in which they find him'. They had found him as Bart had left him, with his chain made fast to an iron ball three hundred pounds in weight; and in the misery of this iron bondage they had carried him to the Tournelle. Nor was it till Bart's keys had been fetched from Saint-Cloud, and much hammering and shaking administered, that the irons could be removed.

Bart himself was brought in, along with his keys, by the officers of the Parlement, where criminal proceedings were instituted against him; but before he could be arraigned, a Royal order had transferred the proceedings to the Châtelet, there to be promptly quashed by the influence of Olivier's creatures. Bart therefore was free to return to

[1] *See* Picot, *Le Parlement sous Charles VIII. Les Débuts du Règne—Le Procès Criminel d'Olivier le Dain*, (Mémoires lus à l'Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques 1876–7, Paris, 1877), upon whose account of the career and trial of Olivier le Daim the narrative in the text is based.

[2] Picot, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

his master's side, and he did so with the fixed resolve of inciting that master against those whom he represented as his persecutors. Requiring no special incitement to tyrannical courses, Olivier had readily espoused his cause, and had determined to strike the Parlement in the person of Bellefaye, one of its magistrates, against whom he happened to cherish a personal grudge. Getting together a gang of ruffians under a certain Beauharnais, who, like the Count of Meulan himself, had combined the profession of the tonsorial art with secret activities of a questionable description, Olivier had caused Bellefaye to be seized along with the two ushers who had rescued Gaignan, and had lodged them in a disreputable pothouse, the haunt of prostitutes and desperadoes. Meanwhile Beauharnais' ruffians had occupied Bellefaye's house, removed such of his possessions as were thought worthy of Olivier's acceptance, and appropriated for themselves the substantial sum of 200 *écus*.[1] Bellefaye had then been brought before an extra-judicial commission appointed at Olivier's request, and was not set free until he had been deprived of his judicial office, a precaution deemed expedient lest he should reappear upon the magisterial Bench, there to rehearse his wrongs to the Parlement, which had been outraged in his person.

Such had been the relations of Olivier le Daim with the tribunal before which he was now summoned to answer for his misdeeds. The immediate occasion of his arrest is unknown; it may have been effected on an order of the Council obtained by the influence of the Princes, but it would seem more likely to have been brought about by the intervention of the Parlement. The succeeding century accounted for it by adopting a tradition which enjoys an evil association with more than one tainted name.[2] According to this story the death of Louis brought with it no change in the habits of Olivier, who continued his freebooting expeditions as though nothing had happened, picketing the highways with his ruffians and holding intercepted travellers to ransom. Thus it fell out, in the

[1] About 400 guineas in modern money: see Appendix, Table II, Part I.

[2] Macaulay, *History of England*, Ch. V, Character of Colonel Percy Kirke. As regards Olivier le Daim the story is to be found briefly referred to in J. Bouchet's *Annales d'Aquitaine*, first published in 1524.

beginning of October 1483, that a certain gentleman of Paris was kidnapped and placed in confinement in the Tour du Louvre. The gentleman's wife sought out Olivier, and, throwing herself at his feet, entreated him to set her husband at liberty. The suppliant was young and of singular beauty : Olivier promised her that, if she would consent to spend the night in his company, the morrow's dawn should find the captive beyond the prison walls. Persuaded that a refusal would amount to signing her husband's death-warrant, the unhappy lady took the bitter resolution of immolating her honour on the altar of her affection. Escaping at dawn from the tyrant's embraces, she hurried to the Tour du Louvre, where her husband was to be restored to her under the terms of Olivier's promise ; and there, indeed, she found him, but lying dead on the river bank, strangled by Olivier's ruffians. Roused by her cries, the people of the place collected round her, and in the breasts of those rude auditors her pitiful tale awoke a thirst for vengeance which might not be appeased until justice had intervened.

Such is the traditional explanation of Olivier's arrest. All that is certain is that, by whatever means they came there, Olivier and Daniel Bart were in the Parlement's jails within three months of Louis XI's death (19 November), and the Captain of the Château du Louvre was threatened by the Parlement with the penalties to which his prisoners were liable, should he suffer them to be removed from his custody without the sanction of the Court. The apprehensions which the magistrates entertained were inspired by their fear of the King's Council. That body was believed to view their proceedings with disfavour, and was credited with a desire to transfer the cause to a special commission, from whose jurisdiction Olivier would almost certainly escape with the infliction of a purely nominal penalty. The King himself was bound by his solemn promise that his father's servants should come to no harm ; Olivier's colleagues were still influential ; and one of his noble enemies, the Duke of Orleans, concurred in objecting to the action of the Parlement, because he hoped for a decision against Olivier before one of his own tribunals, when he would acquire by escheat the

great fortune which the prisoner was known to have amassed. It was not long before the magistrates discovered how well founded were their anxieties, for on the 26th November they were enjoined by Royal letters to stay their proceedings, on the ground that Olivier, who owned lands in the Orleans demesne, was amenable to the Duke's jurisdiction. This suggestion the Procureur-Général vehemently combated, and the Parlement, accepting his contention, commanded that the prisoners should be transferred to the greater security of the Conciergerie dungeons. The order was a challenge to the Council, and it was one which that body might desire, but did not dare, to take up. Their own authority was not so stable that they might venture upon a contest in which legal right and a great weight of popular opinion would be against them.

Few men of whom history has to tell are less deserving of pity than Olivier le Daim; yet it is impossible to read of his long agony in the dank dungeons of the Conciergerie without according him a measure of compassion. In that merciless age stern laws, cruel usages, and penalties scarcely human in their ferocity pressed with impartial severity upon all, whether innocent or guilty, who came within the purview of justice. More justly, we may well believe, than many, and not less harshly, we may be sure, than most, was Olivier now exposed to the rigours of a ruthless judicial system. The criminal registers do not, indeed, expressly assert that he was put to the torture, but he can scarcely have escaped an ordeal which did but correspond to the modern process of cross-examination which, with its feline amenities, is employed in its stead by an age more tender to physical than to mental misery. But even if the rack be left aside, the tale is grim enough, for the sufferings of the prisoner during his long incarceration were such as medical science alone can gauge.[1] Slowly, however, and painfully,

[1] Olivier was secured by heavy chains attached to an iron ring round the left ankle, which, lest its weight should rest on the foot, was in its turn suspended from a massive iron belt that rested on the hips. Soon after his arrival in the Conciergerie he complained that the iron belt was tight, and hurt him. It was ordered to be eased, but the person to whom the key had been entrusted had left the capital, and a week passed before it could be recovered. During this time Olivier's sufferings grew worse and worse, and by the time the key arrived, he was seriously ill; the surgeon reported that

the cumbrous machinery of the trial moved to its predestined end, and at length, in May 1484, after six weary months of judicial technicalities, of sittings in the Grand' Chambre and sittings on Commission, of examination and cross-examination, of *procès-verbaux* and *enquêtes*, the Court decided to finish the business off. A week later its sentence was delivered: Olivier was to die by strangulation; his body was to be hanged on the Paris gibbet; and, subject to the payment of damages to his accusers when the amounts should be ascertained, his goods were to be confiscated. It was further resolved, lest Charles should be tempted to exercise his prerogative of mercy, that the sentence should be executed 'without notice thereof being given to the King'.[1] The precaution proved that Olivier could expect no mercy; nor did he look for it. Though he had not known how to live with honour, he knew how to die with courage. When the death warrant was communicated to him, he said it was well, and asked for a confessor. Three hours later he was delivered to the executioner, and was carried, unmoved by the curses of the crowd, undaunted by the instruments of death, to the public gibbet of Montfaucon, where the criminals of the capital were wont to pay the supreme forfeit to the law. There, as the sentence prescribed, he was 'attached, hanged and strangled'; and at the same spot a few days afterwards his accomplice, Daniel Bart, shared his master's fate.

While these events had been in progress, the Court had been rent by keen rivalry over the composition of the Privy Council. By agreement with the various parties a Council, limited in number to fifteen members, had been constituted on the morrow of Louis XI's death. Of the men who had secured seats at this board nearly all were members of some great feudal House or were avowed sympathizers

the weight of metal had not only inflicted deep external wounds, but by its pressure on the intestines had also caused internal complications of a grave nature. Olivier was accordingly granted the privilege of lighter bonds.

[1] The news of Olivier's execution was broken to Charles VIII, then on the way to his coronation, by La Vacquerie, First President of the Parlement. The Council were astonished, but helpless. The only thing they could do they did, assigning to the Duke of Orleans the forfeited possessions of Olivier, which amounted to a considerable fortune.

with the princely faction; of most of them it was not unjustly believed that they would embrace any good opportunity to 'faire la Praguerie'; [1] and loyal supporters of the established order could be found only in the Count of Beaujeu, in Louis d'Amboise, Bishop of Albi, in Antoine de Castelnau, Baron du Lau, and in the two Marshals of France, Philippe de Crèvecœur, Seigneur d'Esquerdes, and Pierre de Rohan, Seigneur de Gié. In accepting a Council of this complexion the Beaujeus had given a signal proof of that capacity for prudent self-restraint by which they were so clearly distinguished from their impetuous and impolitic rivals. The King being too young for personal rule, the constitution of a Council of one sort or another was an urgent necessity of the situation, and the Beaujeus were in the dilemma of having either to concur in a compromise which seemed little favourable to their interests or to precipitate a trial of strength for which the time was unripe. They had chosen the former alternative, content to wait upon the future for the establishment of their influence. The princely Council made a brave show, but as an instrument of government it was doomed to speedy eclipse. Men with the tastes and habits of the Duke of Orleans and his feudal adherents were wholly deficient in the qualities and capacities which were demanded by the intricate and arduous task of administration. A Council innocent of lawyers, of financiers, and of administrators was altogether inapt for the complex work of government; and from the first moment of its creation the new body began to undergo a gradual transformation into an organ of government *bourgeois* in composition, practical in character, and monarchical in sympathy. It was true that the aristocratic element was increased by the addition of more Princes, such as the Dukes of Bourbon and Alençon, the Cardinal of Bourbon, the Counts of Angoulême and Vendôme, Philip of Savoy, Count of Bresse, and Francis of Laval, Count of Montfort. It was true also that the Princes arrogated to themselves the right to bring their

[1] This was the character given to Odet d'Aydie, Count of Comminges, by the author of the 'Poème faite à la Louange de la Dame de Beaujeu,' ed. A. Lancelot, *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, vol. viii, (Paris, 1733), p. 583.

adherents with them to the board. But alongside of these new members the Beaujeus for their part contrived to introduce a still larger number of their own partisans. These included not only Louis Malet, Sire de Graville, and Louis, Count of La Trémoille, both destined to play important parts at no distant date, but also no fewer than nine of the men who had been associated with the late King's Government. Such were his intimate friend and confidant, Antoine de Chabannes, Count of Dammartin; Imbert de Batarnay, Seigneur du Bouchage, his minister; Poncet de Rivière and Gilbert de Grassaye, his chamberlains; Yvonne de Foie, his Grand Veneur; the Seigneurs du Lude et de L'Isle; the Archbishops of Sens and Narbonne; and Étienne de Vesc, Bailli of Meaux, the tutor of Charles VIII. Considerable additions were also made to the professional element, including Guillaume Cousinot, Michel Gaillart, and Jean Bourré, servants of the late King, Pierre Doriolle, his Chancellor, and Olivier le Roux and Guillaume Briçonnet. By these additions the party of the Beaujeus was placed in a numerical superiority on the Council, and its preponderance was further enhanced by the fitful attendance of the Princes, unversed in business and wearied by routine. By the end of the year the aristocratic Council accepted by Madame in September had been transformed into a body not materially different from that which had governed the country in the last years of Louis XI's reign.

By this effacement of the feudal elements in the Council the Orleanist faction were disappointed in their early hopes, but as the year drew to a close, they hit upon another expedient for compromising the authority of the Beaujeus. They demanded the convocation of the States-General of France. The manœuvre, which is sometimes thought to have originated in the fertile brain of Commynes, was undoubtedly ingenious. Little though the Princes really sympathized with the popular cause, their proposal was in itself an appeal to the opinion of the nation, and if the Beaujeus were to reject it, they could be taxed with clinging to power in defiance of the nation's will. On the other hand, were the proposal to be accepted, the Princes might easily be borne to triumph on a wave of popular discontent,

for if the death of Louis XI had been hailed by all classes with a common feeling of relief, it might be expected that an assembly composed of their representatives would be eager to demolish his daughter's pretensions. In the prevailing temper of the people the convocation of a national assembly was a dangerous experiment for the Beaujeus. Perilous though it might be, however, Madame had no alternative but to make it; and hoping to wrest to her own advantage the weapon on which her adversaries relied, she issued writs for the convocation of the States-General on New Year's Day, 1484.

NOTE. The view expressed in the text that Anne de Beaujeu exercised a controlling influence over the government of Charles VIII's minority requires justification, having regard to the divergence of opinion which exists among modern writers. 'Nous pouvons affirmer', said M. P. Pélicier, in his *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu* (Chartres, 1882), p. viii, 'que la dame de Beaujeu a réellement gouverné la France durant les premières années du règne nominal de son frère.' On the other hand, in vol. iv, Part II, pp. 421–2, of Lavisse's *Histoire de France* (Paris, 1902), M. Ch. Petit-Dutaillis wrote as follows: 'D'après les témoignages contemporains, Anne de Beaujeu eut un rôle politique de premier ordre, jusqu'au jour où Charles VIII sortit de l'adolescence . . . Nous pensons toutefois que les historiens ont eu tort d'attribuer exclusivement à Anne de Beaujeu la direction politique, et que son mari eut une part égale à la sienne dans la conduite des affaires. Non seulement, dans les correspondances où l'on parle de ceux qui gouvernent la France, on cite presque toujours en même temps "Monsieur et Madame", mais il est certain que Monsieur présidait, avec la plus grande assiduité, le Conseil du roi, et que Madame n'y venait point. D'ailleurs Pierre de Beaujeu, à l'avènement de Charles VIII, avait quarante-trois ans, et sa femme n'en avait que vingt-deux. Depuis dix ans, grâce à sa souplesse, ce cadet de la maison de Bourbon était devenu l'homme de confiance de la Royauté. A l'école de son beau-père, il avait appris à conduire les hommes et à se tirer des pas difficiles. Louis XI, au moment de son pèlerinage à Saint-Claude, en 1482, lui avait donné la lieutenance générale du royaume, et, à son lit de mort, lui avait confié la garde de Charles VIII. Ce n'est donc point le gouvernement d'Anne de Beaujeu qui a succédé à celui de Louis XI: c'est le gouvernement des Beaujeus qu'il faut dire'.

It is quite true, as M. Petit-Dutaillis says, that the Beaujeus are frequently spoken of by their contemporaries as being jointly

responsible for the government, and it would be absurd to suppose that Beaujeu, with his age, experience, and official position, was wholly without influence. But for the very reasons which M. Petit-Dutaillis gives, observers would be likely to assign responsibility to the Beaujeus jointly, or even to Beaujeu exclusively; the less probable it was that a girl of twenty-two would direct the government, the more striking are contemporary statements that she actually did so; and in my judgement these statements are sufficiently numerous and explicit to dispose of M. Petit-Dutaillis' contention.

No one, perhaps, was in a better position to judge of the true state of affairs than Jaligny, the Beaujeus' secretary, and he comments thus upon the operations in Guyenne in 1487. 'Audit voyage de Guyenne estoit toûjours avec le Roy Madame de Beaujeu sa sœur, sans aucunement l'abandonner, et avoit toûjours le soin et la garde de sa Personne, et ne se faisoit aucune chose qui touchât le Roy et le Royaume que ce ne fût de son sceu, vouloir, et consentement'; Jaligny, *Histoire de Charles VIII*, ed. Godefroy (Paris, 1684), p. 23.

The enemies of the Government expressed the same opinion. Their grievance was, not that Beaujeu had thrust himself into positions which they ought to have filled, but that Anne had monopolized power. In the manifestoes of January 1485, in which the Dukes of Orleans and of Brittany complained that the King was kept in subjection and his authority was usurped, they laid the whole blame upon Anne: 'a esté le tout fait par Madame de Beaujeu et ses adherans, laquelle s'est vantée qu'elle tiendra le roi en bail, et en aura la garde et le gouvernement jusques à ce qu'il ait vingt ans accomplis; . . . et pour mieux user de son authorité a mis en ses mains tout le fait des finances'; Godefroy, *Histoire de Charles VIII* (Paris, 1684), pp. 466–7: and *cf.* the letter of the Duke of Brittany to the Town of Sens, dated the 29th January 1485, where he speaks of 'la subjection en quoi il (le roi) est tenu par une femme et par ses adherez, laquelle veut tout faire et tout gouverner' (Lobineau, *Histoire de Bretagne* (Paris, 1707), vol. ii, cols. 1421–4), and the speech of Orleans' Chancellor to the Parlement, as cited by M. Édouard Maugis, *Histoire du Parlement de Paris de l'Avènement des Rois Valois à la Mort de Henri IV*, vol. i, p. 660.

Similarly Landois on his trial declared that his policy had been 'en faveur du Duc d'Orléans, et pour débouter Madame de Beaujeu de Cour et lui ôter le gouvernement du roi et du royaume'; Dupuy, *Histoire de la Réunion de la Bretagne à la France* (Paris, 1880), vol. ii, p. 75. His alliance with Orleans and the French Princes had been made 'pour crainte de ladite dame et des seigneurs de Bretaigne absens du pays et lors estans en France aliez avecques ladite dame et d'elle soubtenuz, et icelle entreprinse conclute devoient avoir le Roy en leurs mains et envoyer ladite dame à sa meson':

Arch. Nat., cited by P. Pélicier, *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu*, p. 87, note.

The ambassadors of foreign powers took the same view. The Venetian ambassador told the Signory on the 13th September 1487, that to obtain his desire with the French Government the Pope must win over Madame de Beaujeu to his side; *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, vol. i, p. 166–7: and a Spanish envoy, wishing to become the mediator of peace, 'therefore spoke with Madame', delivering letters credential from the Queen of Castille to her; Letter of Flores, the Papal Nuncio, to Innocent VIII, the 28th July 1490, *ibid.*, p. 195.

The opinion of the diplomatic agents was based upon their knowledge of the facts. It is to Madame that the writers address their reports upon the behaviour of the Duke of Alençon (P. Pélicier, *Dame de Beaujeu*, p. 202) and on the best means of enforcing French claims upon Brittany (below, p. 133). It is to her that Commynes looks for a reversal of his disgrace; 'le roy et Madame, puis peu de jours, me donnent espérance de mes afferes' ('Lettres de P. de Comynes aux Archives de Florence', ed. E. Benoist, in *Revue de l'Instruction Publique*, April 1863, p. 58; Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Lettres et Négociations de Philippe de Commines*, vol. ii, p. 69, and *cf.* p. 75): and La Balue thanks Étienne de Vesc for looking after his interests, 'et principalement de moy entretenir en la bonne grâce du roy et Madame' (A. de Boislisle, 'Notice biographique et historique sur Étienne de Vesc', in *Annuaire-Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de France*, 1879, pp. 321–322). Aggrieved by the violation of the pact of Châteaubriant, Rieux makes his protest to Anne: Alain Bouchart, *Les Grandes Croniques de Bretaigne*, ed. H. Le Meignen (Nantes, 1886), fo. 237. Alarmed by the proposed cession of their province to Spain, the Consuls of Perpignan appeal to her in language which leaves no doubt of their conviction that she determines the policy of the Government. 'Vous estes, Madame', they wrote to her, 'la princesse de tout le royaume qui en ce devez veiller plus que tout autre et pour ce défendre telles choses, pour beaucoup de raisons. Nous vous en advertissons et vous supplions et pour Dieu prions et requérons que sur ce, par les remèdes que à ce appartiendra, vous plaise y pourvoir tellement qu'il y soit remédié, et que tels brouilleurs et inventeurs de maux soient punis': Pélicier, *Dame de Beaujeu*, p. 186, and *Ordonnances des Rois de France de la Troisième Race*, vol. xx, pp. 386–7.

Nor can the following passages in the writings of contemporary chroniclers be ignored entirely: 'Madame de Beaujeu qui lors guidoit le trosne de France', Alain Bouchart, *Les Grandes Croniques de Bretaigne*, ed. H. Le Meignen (Nantes, 1886), fol. 230; 'ladicte dame qui lors toutes les ardues affaires du royaulme expedioit', *ibid.*, fol. 237; 'plusieurs estans mal contens de ce que Anne seur de Charles estoit preferee devant les aultres au gouvernement des

choses', *ibid.*, fol. 242. 'Madame de Beaujeu, sœur du roi, laquelle gouvernoit tout le royaume', Olivier de la Marche, *Mémoires*, Coll. Petitot, First Series, vol. x, p. 436. 'Madame Anne de France . . . laquelle avoit le gouvernement de la personne du Roy', Jean Bouchet, *Le Panegyric du Chevalier sans Reproche*, Coll. Petitot, First Series, vol. xiv, p. 392. The Princes were 'indignez que madame de Beaujeu avoit le gouvernement du roy son frère', Jean de Bourdigné, *Chroniques d'Anjou et de Maine*, edit. of 1841, vol. ii, p. 251. 'Mais tantost au commencement de la susception du royaulme se engendrerent noyses et discordz pour la tutelle de Charles et le gouvernement du royaulme, plusieurs estant mal contens de ce que Anne seur de Charles estoit preferee devant les aultres au gouvernement des choses': Pierre Desrey, *Croniques de France* (1516), fol. cciii. 'Sed statim ab initio suscepti regni ortae sunt de Caroli tutela et regni administratione discordiae, aegre ferentibus plerisque Anna Caroli sorore rebus gerendis anteferri': R. Gaguin, *Compendium de Origine et Gestis Francorum*, edit. of 1528, fol. cccxxxiii. At the States of Tours 'fut advisé, pour oster tout different, qu'il n'y auroit aucun Regent en France, mais que ladicte Dame de Beaujeu, sœur du Roy, qui estoit sage, prudente et vertueuse, en ensuyvant la volonté du feu Roy Loys, auroit seulement le gouvernement de la personne du jeune Roy:' Nicole Gilles, *Chroniques de France*, edit. of 1573, fol. 417, and *passim*.

Two or three quotations will suffice to show what the following century thought about the matter.

'Après la mort du Roy Loys unziesme,' wrote d'Argentré in his *Histoire de Bretaigne* (Paris, 1588), fols. 723–4, 'il se nourrit une grande querelle pour le gouvernement du Royaume durant le bas aage du Roy, la Dame de Beaujeu voulut commander, comme femme hautaine, et ambitieuse, et qui tenoit bien de l'humeur et condition de son père, par lequel elle avoit esté ordonnee tutrice, et regente du Royaume durant le bas aage du Roy Charles huictiesme. Le Duc d'Orleans comme premier Prince du sang le contredisoit, maintenant que cela luy appartenoit . . . Ceste femme ne vouloit endurer que ce jeune Duc se meslast d'affaires quelconques.'

Belleforest was still more emphatic. In the States-General of Tours, he said, 'fut arresté qu'il n'y auroit point de Regent . . . ains seroit le Roy mis soubs la charge, tutele et gouvernement de Madame Anne sœur du Roy, Princesse sage vertueuse et de grand conseil . . . Tout cecy fut fait par la volonté et dernière ordonnance du Roy defunct, qui voulut que Madame Anne eut ceste charge: à elle de là en avant se raportoient toutes les requestes: elle despechoit comme chef du conseil les affaires, les estats et offices de France'; *Histoire des Neuf Roys Charles de France* (Paris, 1568), p. 347, and *of.* his *Grandes Annales*, vol. ii (Paris, 1579), fols. 1285–1307.

'Elle estoit fort vindicative,' said Brantôme, 'et de l'humeur en

cela du roy son père, voire en tout ; car elle estoit fine, trinquate, corrompue, plaine de dissimulation, et grand ' hypocrite, qui, pour son ambition, se masquoit et se desguisoit en toutes sortes. Dont le royaume se commanceant à se fascher de ses humeurs, encor qu'elle fut sage et vertueuse, les porta impatiemment : et lorsque le roy alla à Naples, elle ne demeura plus en tiltre de régente, mais son mary, M. de Bourbon, régent. Il est bien vray qu'elle lui faisoit faire beaucoup de choses de sa teste ; car elle le gouvernoit et le sçavoit bien mener, d'autant qu'il tenoit un peu de la sotte humeur, voyre beaucoup : toutefois le Conseil lui répugnoit [i. e. résistait] et la conterrolloit. Elle voulloit user ung peu de quelque prérogative et authorité à l'endroit de la reyne Anne ; mais elle trouvoit bien chausseure à son pied, comme l'on dict ; car la reyne Anne estoyt une fine Bretonne, comme j'ay dict, et qui estoit fort superbe et altière à l'endroict de ses esgaux ; de sorte qu'il fallust à madame de Bourbon caller et laisser à la reyne sa belle-sœur tenir son rang, et maintenir sa grandeur et majesté, comme estoit de raison ; ce qui luy debvoit fort fascher ; car, estant régente, elle tenoit terriblement sa grandeur . . . Certes, c'estoit une maistresse femme ' ; Brantôme, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. L. Lalanne, vol. viii, pp. 102–3 ; and *cf.* vol. viii, pp. 55–6.

III

THE STATES-GENERAL OF 1484

It is worth while to dwell briefly upon the salient features of the institution upon the progressive development of which the future of popular liberty in France seemed mainly to depend at the close of the fifteenth century. Whatever their shortcomings—and they were neither few nor trifling—the States-General enjoyed the prestige that is conferred by ancient origin, by striking endeavour, and by notable achievement. Lost in the mists of an unchronicled past, their infancy could not be traced with precision; but it was certain that kings in France had been accustomed from very early times to summon assemblies of their subjects, and the limitations imposed by feudalism upon the power of the Crown had increased the need of some consultative machinery. By feudal law the King, of his own right, could levy no taxes beyond the borders of his demesne, could conduct no national war, and could enact no laws of general application; and the *Curia Regis*, though able to sanction his acts in unimportant affairs, could not entirely remove the restriction upon his power. An increasing sphere of activity, the consequent insufficiency of the demesne revenues, the growth of the emancipated towns, for which no adequate provision had been made in the feudal organization, and a growing need of national sympathy and support, had all conspired to persuade the King of the desirability of infusing new vigour into the old system of national councils; and the time was ripe for action when Philip the Fair made successful experiments in his quarrel with Boniface VIII (1301–2), and in his campaign against the Templars (1308). The assemblies convened by that monarch had contented themselves with a formal endorsement of the Royal policy; but their successors were soon to discover that a request for approval afforded opportunities for criticism or dissent. Half a century later, under vigorous leadership and in face of an

unfortunate Prince, the national assembly had assumed a new attitude towards the throne, and had seriously endeavoured to obtain control of taxation and expenditure, to enforce ministerial responsibility, and generally to lay the foundations of a system of constitutional Government. Those endeavours had failed, and the Hundred Years' War had not been propitious to further experiments ; but something had been done to establish a tradition of ordered liberty, and it was to her States-General that France, if she should desire political freedom, seemed bound to look.

When the King desired to meet the States, he issued notices of convocation to his officers, and the somewhat complicated machinery by which the nation elected its representatives was set in motion. In feudal times the right of attending the *Curia Regis* had been purely personal, the duty of advising him being an obligation upon all lay and ecclesiastical tenants-in-chief, and the elective element being present only by reason of the fact that religious and municipal corporations could not otherwise than by representation perform the service required of them. In the course of the fifteenth century, however, about the time that the large towns ceased to be political forces, the decay of feudal principles, coupled with a growing dislike among all classes of the trouble and expense involved in obeying a Royal summons, had brought about a modification of the personal system : whereas in 1428 the King had called to his presence all the individuals ' accustomed to be called ', the States about to meet at Tours were to be composed almost entirely of representative elements.[1] Though it had originated with the Court, the change was not inimical to popular liberties. It reduced the preponderance in numbers of the privileged classes ; and, since it was accompanied by an extension to the inhabitants of small towns and country districts of the franchise which had once been confined to

[1] Certain great nobles and officials sat as of right in the States-General in the fifteenth century, perhaps because these assemblies had been regarded, not as a separate institution, but as an extension of the King's Council and the Parlement. In 1484 the Princes of the Blood, the peers of France, the great officers of the Crown, members of the Privy Council and the Finance Boards, and certain great seigneurs sat with the elected deputies at Tours, and joined in their deliberations.

the *bourgeoisie* of the communal towns, the assembly gained in authority by acquiring a truly national basis.

In the provinces which enjoyed a right of local self-government—the *pays d'états*, as they were called—the election of deputies to the national assembly was carried out in the local estates. Elsewhere the electoral methods most in vogue—there was no uniformity about the procedure—were in some respects singular. The bailiwicks and *sénéchaussées* formed the constituencies, and all of them were entitled to equal representation without regard to population or importance. The qualifications for the franchise varied for the three orders. In the case of the nobles it was conferred by nobility of birth coupled with ownership of a fief in the district. The ecclesiastical electors consisted of the higher Church dignitaries, the representatives of Chapters and other corporate bodies, and the beneficed clergy of the Division. As regards the commons, different systems were in use in urban and rural areas. In the towns the franchise was generally confined to the municipal officers, the 'notable citizens', and the representatives of the guilds. In the country districts, on the other hand, where the parish was the political unit, virtually all who were liable to pay *taille* enjoyed elective rights; and so rare in that class were exemptions from the *taille* that the system approximated closely to one of adult male suffrage. The methods, again, by which the privileged and unprivileged classes exercised their powers, differed materially one from another. For the nobility and clergy the franchise was direct; upon receipt of Royal letters of convocation they met in the chief town of the district, and there the men by whom they were to be represented were chosen by the votes of the assembled electors; their *cahiers*, or schedules of petition and remonstrance, were also drawn up at the same time and in the same manner. For the commons a more complicated system was in use, the final selection of deputies being entrusted to the towns and villages considered as separate political entities; and it was by the elected representatives of the electorate that the deputies to the States were actually chosen. The first step, then, in an election amongst the commons, and the only one in which the bulk of the people was directly

concerned, was the selection of the official electors. In the towns the process was usually carried out, and the *cahier* of the town drafted, at a meeting convened in the Town Hall under the presidency of the municipal officers. In country districts the letters of convocation, communicated by the Royal officers to the parish clergy of the division, were read from the pulpits to the assembled congregations; vestry meetings, as they might now be called, were summoned for the ensuing Sunday; and in these gatherings the *cahiers* of the parishes were settled, and their representatives were chosen. From motives of economy a further intermediate step was sometimes interposed, the representatives of the small towns and villages of a sub-district uniting to send to the general assembly of the bailiwick a common representative furnished with a joint *cahier*. Finally, the deputies by whom the bailiwick was to be represented in the States were elected, and its *cahier* was drawn up, by the assembled representatives of towns and villages, meeting in the chief town of the division, and, as a rule, under the chairmanship of its Mayor.

The procedure of the States, like the electoral methods, was to some extent fluid, but the prevailing practice favoured separate consultations of the several orders, and to reach a general resolution it was accordingly necessary that all three orders should agree. This principle demanded as a pre-requisite of every decision an unity of view and purpose which the orders rarely achieved; but it was a precaution upon which the commons had insisted through a not unreasonable apprehension lest a system of majority voting should be abused by the privileged orders, whose pockets were unaffected by the subsidies they granted, and whose hearts were cold to the interests of the people.

The powers of the States-General elude precise definition; always vague and uncertain, they depended upon the circumstances of the time, upon the strength of public opinion, upon the energy of the assembly, and upon the embarrassment of the Court. In theory the deliberative powers of the assembly were derived from the speech from the throne, in which the King or his Chancellor explained the objects for which it had been convened, and formulated

the Royal demands. In practice the States sometimes ventured upon bolder flights, as in the fourteenth century, when they had made a determined, though unavailing, attempt to establish true parliamentary government, and as once again at a later period when, at a highly critical juncture, they had launched boldly out upon a troubled political sea. But in normal times their efforts were less ambitious, for they were usually content with such rights as the sovereign might see fit to allow them, and these were limited in practice to giving *aide et conseil*, or, in other words, to granting subsidies, submitting advice, and presenting remonstrances. The right of offering advice, valueless at any time if divorced from other parliamentary powers, had resolved itself into a mere presentation of petitions and remonstrances founded on the national *cahiers*. The King was at liberty to ignore their recommendations, and these could take effect in law only if he should see fit to incorporate them in Royal ordinances. No constitutional lawyer had ever pretended that the States-General enjoyed legislative powers. As regards taxation, however, the exclusive right of the national representatives to impose it was an axiom of politics. 'No tax', said an orator at Tours, 'can be imposed without the consent of the taxpayer'; and the same view was reflected in the considered judgement of Commynes, who denied that a French sovereign had power to exact a penny of taxation against the will of those who were called upon to pay. It might be argued, as he saw, that there would be times when to await the meeting of the States would involve delay at the outbreak of hostilities; but his answer was that trouble of the kind was usually long brewing, and even when the emergency was sudden, there would be time to explain its origin, so that it should not be thought to belong to the class of senseless conflicts arbitrarily entered upon as money-making expedients. When the King's cause was just, good subjects would grudge no sacrifice to further it; and a ruler who went to war with the approval of his people was much stronger and more terrible to his foes. He could not therefore sufficiently condemn the disservice which flatterers did to their prince in imputing to him a right of arbitrary taxation; it resulted in making him an object of

fear and hatred to his neighbours, who pictured as the last of evils the prospect of coming under his rule.[1]

Unhappily for France the fiscal practices of the Crown were at variance with these political theories. In the throes of the English wars the States-General of 1435 and 1439, full of solicitude for their distracted country and of confidence in the King, its saviour, had made the generous blunder of creating, along with a standing army, the permanent taxation by which its cost was to be defrayed. But the instrument which they had devised, the *taille*, was capable of indefinite expansion, and, encouraged by an imprudent abnegation of the national rights, Louis XI had carried his encroachments to the highest pitch of exaction ; of the taxes raised during his reign none had been sanctioned by the States-General. In 1484, as will be seen, an effort was to be made to regain the control which had been lost, and a substantial reduction was to be effected in the *taille*, which was not again for two reigns to reach an inflated figure ; but the effort came too late, and taxation escaped for ever from popular control. During the sixteenth century the yield of the old taxes came to be regarded as the legitimate property of the Crown ; and though States-General might occasionally be invited to sanction some new fiscal expedient, it was rather in the hope of commending it to the people than as a concession to their constitutional claims. A Venetian ambassador noticed that the King had only to express a desire for a given sum of money, and his order was as speedily executed as though the nation had decided the matter of its own accord[2] ; and in Francis I's time an Assembly of Notables would not only profess their eagerness to make any sacrifice which the Royal cause might demand, but would go so far as to thank the King

[1] Commynes, *Mémoires* (ed. de Mandrot), vol. i, pp. 443 *et seq.*

[2] Albèri, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, vol. i, pp. 232–3, and Tommaseo, *Relations des Ambassadeurs*, vol. i, pp. 272–3 : The French have ' del tutto remessa la libertà e volontà sua al suo re ; tal che basta che lui dichi, voler tanto, approbar tanto, deliberar tanto, che il tutto è eseguito, e fatto *praecise*, come se essi stessi lo deliberassero. Ed è andato tanto innanzi questa cosa, che ora pur qualch' uno che ha più spirito degli altri, dice, che siccome prima li suoi re se chiamavano *reges Francorum*, ora si possono dimandar *reges servorum* ; perchè, oltre il pagar quanto è dimandato, quel che gli avanza è anche alla disposizione del re, prontissimo.'

for 'being graciously pleased to proffer a request where it was in his power to impose a command'.[1] 'Some of the more clear-sighted Frenchmen consider', added the Ambassador, 'that their Kings, who used to be called kings of the Franks, might now more justly be styled kings of slaves',[2] for 'it invariably happens in France that, when once the people have paid some tribute two or three times, it is made perpetual, and by this means *tailles* and other subsidies formerly levied on the people are still imposed, and will be continued till the end of the world.'[3]

The fact was that the States-General were unequally matched in their conflict with the Crown. Nurtured by lawyers in traditions of Roman autocracy and hailed by ecclesiastics as eldest sons of the Church, kings could not but distrust an institution in which a claim to national sovereignty seemed to be embodied; and its past history, so strangely compounded of high pretensions and docile submission, had aroused both their fear and their contempt. In truth, however, the institution, considered as a source of public liberties, was precluded by its origin, by its constitution, by its traditions, from effective opposition to the Royal power. To begin with, its members invariaby considered that they were discharging a duty which they owed to the King rather than exercising powers which they had a right to enjoy; and this fatal conviction cramped their energies, damped their zeal, and sapped their strength. Then they had accepted without protest a theory which deprived them of the right to initiate deliberations by assuming that the questions which came within their competence were such only as the King might be pleased to submit. Their sessions, too, were dependent upon the Royal pleasure, the King summoning and dismissing them at will; and entirely devoid as they were of guarantees for regular meetings, they were too often employed merely as a political expedient in times of national disaster or financial distress, when the exigencies of the situation enforced submission to the demands of the Crown. Even

[1] Lavisse, *Histoire de France*, vol. v (ii), p. 56.
[2] Albèri, and Tommaseo, *loc. cit.*
[3] Protest of the Estates of Normandy, August to September 1525; Lavisse, *op. cit.* p. 44.

when they had the good fortune to be convened in favourable circumstances, the States were seriously hampered by the theory of the *mandat impératif*, which limited their representative character. Unlike his contemporary in the English Parliament, the member of the States-General was not a representative, in the true sense of the word, but a delegate : upon the mandate of his constituents, by which his powers and duties were defined, his demands and concessions had to be based ; he could make no bargain with the Crown outside the scope of his authority ; and if a new question arose, he was compelled to go back for fresh instructions. Nor were these the only evils of the mandate system. Based as it was upon the principle of civil agency, it involved the payment of members by the bailiwicks that sent them ; and an arrangement which imposed a heavy burden on the electorate, contributed not a little to the formation of a state of public opinion in which national assemblies were little desired. By the electorate they were looked upon as a cause of expense rarely justified by results. To the deputy they were a source of anxiety, danger, and inconvenience ; constituents might disavow him, journeys were perilous, absence was an interruption—all the more irksome in that it was rare—of the business and pleasures of home. Even in England, where Parliamentary life was decidedly more interesting, and more consonant, too, with the genius of the people, the absence from home which it entailed was ' so little . . . to the taste of the burgesses and the country gentlemen, that not only were their expenses defrayed by a considerable salary, but it was found necessary to forbid them absenting themselves from their duties by a positive enactment '.[1]

[1] Froude, *History of England*, vol. i, p. 207, referring to 6 Hen. VIII, cap. 16. In their learned work on the Union between England and Scotland, published since this passage was written, Professors Dicey and Rait speak as follows of conditions in Scotland : ' Attendance in Parliament was, before 1689, rather a burdensome duty than a valuable right. Both to county members and to burgh members it gave trouble and expense ; and both royal burghs and the King's freeholders in any county, after they had obtained representation, had to pay the expenses of their representatives,' p. 38. Again, the King's freeholders ' all had the right, and were under the duty, of attending, when summoned, the King's Parliament. The attendance in practice was felt to be more of a burden than a privilege. Various Acts of Parliament were from time to time passed with a view to induce attendance of King's

Serious as were these causes of weakness, however, it may be questioned whether any of them individually, or, indeed, all of them collectively, contributed so much to blight the hopes of the States-General as that body's own dissensions and divisions. In England all sections of the nation were accustomed to struggle shoulder to shoulder against the Crown, and in the persons of the country gentry, sitting in the Lower House, the aristocratic and landed interests would work in harmonious alliance with the burgesses of the towns. Had such an harmony prevailed in France, the history of the States-General might have been very different; they might, like the English Parliament,[1] have evolved a settled policy, secured constitutional guarantees, and brought the Government under popular control; and, acquiring the wisdom and aptitude for affairs that are born of experience, they might even have contrived to avert the great Revolution by bloodless measures of reform. In

freeholders in Parliament, and to liberate the poorer of such freeholders from the burden of attendance, or rather, from the penalties for non-attendance: such Acts are an Act of 1425; an Act of 1427; an Act of 1503, 1504,' pp. 51–52.

[1] The States-General have no exact counterpart in contemporary Europe. So far as they may be compared with any political institution of the age, the analogy must be sought, not in the English Parliament, with which they were sharply contrasted in composition, in character, in influence, and in destiny, but rather in the Cortes of Castile, to which they bore a close resemblance in not a few respects. Like the States-General, the Cortes were evolved from a Council which advised, but could not control, the King; they consisted of three orders, which deliberated separately; and the third estate was composed of the deputies of the towns, delegated to answer specific questions, and unable to enter upon other subjects without a reference to their constituents. In Spain, as in France, the time and place of the sessions of the States were determined by the King, and in the absence of any constitutional guarantee for periodical meetings they were apt to be ignored except in times of political or pecuniary stress. Lacking the right to initiate discussion, and destitute of legislative powers, the Cortes might debate only such matters as the Government submitted for deliberation, and could act only by way of petition to the Crown, which granted or refused their requests at pleasure; and whilst their proposals did not become law unless incorporated in a Royal enactment, their consent was not requisite to the validity of the King's decrees. There was, however, one important respect in which the Castilian Cortes differed from the French States. Though hampered, like the French States, by local jealousies and class divisions, they had succeeded in a measure in acquiring control over taxation, and the power of the purse had secured for them a degree of consideration which had never been extended to the representatives of the nation in France.

place of sympathy and unity of purpose, however, the States-General were permeated by dissension, suspicion, and hatred. Province was set against province, town against town, class against class. Between France of the North and France of the South there was a great gulf fixed by differences of speech, of customs, of laws, of history, of needs, and of desires. Paris was not yet important enough to command the dominating influence which a great capital enjoys, and its attempts to take the lead were viewed with jealousy and distrust. Divorced from the life of the people, and indifferent to their hopes and sorrows, the nobles cherished only class aims, pursued only selfish objects, and cared for nothing but the maintenance of their own rights, privileges, and exemptions; despising the *Tiers État*, they resisted its efforts at reform, and struggled to keep it in a position of subservience. The resentment which this attitude aroused in the commons combined with their actual and traditional detestation of feudalism to produce an intense class opposition. Hatred of the nobility had become the consuming passion of the people. Far above political liberty they desired social equality; and they dwelt with savage glee upon the prospect of Royalty marching across the grave of freedom to victory over the common foe.

Such, then, were some of the causes which had prevented the States-General from occupying their legitimate position as the key-stone in a constitutional arch. It must not, however, be inferred that their labours were entirely barren of results, and it must be remembered that at the close of the fifteenth century their future was still undecided. The time of their chief activity and importance was but beginning, and in two respects at least their influence was destined to prove considerable. Though devoid of an active share in legislation, they laid in their *cahiers* the foundations of many a law; and it is to the patience, insight, knowledge, and political sagacity with which they passed the life of the nation in review that the most enlightened reforms of a progressive age are due. Moreover, though they were destitute of material power, their moral effect remained; even in their darkest days they were a protest, a warning, an ideal. As a great writer has said, 'they were from one epoch to another a protest against political servitude.

a violent proclamation of certain tutelary principles; for example, that the country has the right to impose taxes, to interfere in its own affairs, and to impose a responsibility upon the agents of power. That these maxims have never perished in France, is to be attributed to the States-General; and it is no small service to render to a people, to maintain in its manners, and renew in its thoughts, the remembrances and rights of liberty.' [1]

The States-General which Madame de Beaujeu had felt herself obliged to convene were summoned to meet at Tours in the New Year of 1484. The elections took place in November 1483, and were marked by a great innovation in electoral procedure, the Royal letters of convocation enjoining that the three orders should act jointly in the selection of their representatives. The experiment was probably adopted by the Court in the belief that the dubious attitude of the privileged classes would thus be corrected by the more sober instincts of the people; but if this were the motive for the change, the hopes which its authors founded upon it were not justified by the event. Whilst the electors of the *Tiers État* were hampered by the deference which they were accustomed to pay to the nobles and clergy, the latter resented an arrangement inimical to their political pretensions and offensive to their social pre-eminence. In Paris, for example, the clergy refused obstinately to participate in any joint election, ignored both the injunctions of the Court and the appeals and threats of their fellow electors, and adhered to their policy of aloofness with the limpet-like tenacity of which the order was capable whenever 'the authority and liberty of the Church' were in question. Nor was it merely in the suggested collaboration of the three Estates that the elections were distasteful to churchmen. No individual summonses were issued to the Bishops, who claimed an inalienable right to attend the States-General by virtue of their office, so that the interests of the Church might not be jeopardized by their absence. This claim was now disallowed. The States-General, they were told, were a temporal, not an ecclesiastical, assembly, and the clergy

[1] Guizot, *History of Civilization*, Eng. trans., vol. i, p. 191

enjoyed no special privilege of attendance. Like the other orders, they might elect and be elected; like them, they were represented by their deputies; and the authority of the States, of which those deputies formed part, was independent of the approval of individual members of the order.[1]

[1] Masselin, *Journal*, pp. 392–409. The Bishops having protested against their exclusion from the States, their remonstrance was referred by the Council to the States, and was considered by them in the session of the 26th February. The complainants alleged that they were the principal members and leaders of the Gallican Church, and as such ought to be the first to be summoned to any solemn assembly. Moreover, in the past they had always been summoned to, and taken part in the deliberations of, the States. Yet in the present case no citation had reached them. They refused to recognize the validity of any decision affecting the Church which might be made without their consent. They would approve and ratify everything so far decided by the States with the exception of the remonstrances touching the Church, but they protested against the failure to summon them to the States and against their resulting exclusion. The Church remonstrances they were bound to reject, because these ignored or defied the authority and good pleasure of the Holy See.

After some debate the several sections concurred in the following reply. States-General, they said, are not provincial councils or Church assemblies of any sort, but are assemblies of the three estates, ordered by the authority of the secular power, to provide for the temporal welfare of the nation, and there is no reason why all the higher clergy should be summoned or permitted to take part. Besides, if all the Bishops possess the right of attendance to which they lay claim, why not the archdeacons and the parish priests as well? And, still more, why not all the nobles and all the people of the realm, whom the affair much more nearly concerns? But such a multiplicity of deputies is absolutely inadmissible and is inconsistent with the election of a specified number of representatives, with the payment of salaries by the people, who could not afford such an enormous burden, and with the electoral procedure. By Royal command the clergy, the nobles, and the commons are convened by *bailliages* and *sénéchaussées*; whoever pleases can attend; the Bishops can be present, if they like; and, if eligible, they can be elected. And in fact several prelates have been sent by the electors to our assembly. Now these clergy who sit among us are deemed to derive their powers from those who elected them, and to come, not as Bishops, but as deputies. It is claimed that established custom entitles all Bishops to be summoned, and to take part, if they please. The contrary is clearly proved to be the fact. We do not refuse admission to the Bishops, provided they do not claim to be paid salaries, but we do not allow that their concurrence is necessary in any respect, or that their disapproval could prejudice our proceedings. The authority of the States could not be sufficient of itself, if the approval of the Bishops were capable of fortifying it.

Cf. Valois, *Registre du Conseil*, Bibl. Éc. Chartes, vol. xliv, p. 421: 'Du XII Mars, au Plessis . . . Touchant les prélaz de ce royaume qui ont différé et différent de songer ès articles de l'Église, et qui y vueillent besogner à part, dont les estats ne sont pas contans, attendu qu'ils sont desdits estats,

On the 7th January, when most of them had reached Tours, the deputies went out to Montils, where the Court was lodging, and were presented by Beaujeu to the King. For one who could appreciate its significance, the ceremony gave evident proof of the progress of national unity; for the two hundred and fifty deputies who attended it included delegates from the newly incorporated provinces [1] which had not yet taken part in the labours of States-General, and never before had such an assembly approached so closely to the ideal of national representation. A week later the young sovereign entered Tours in state, to honour with his presence the formal opening of the States (15 January). As soon as Charles and his gay retinue had taken their seats, the Chancellor, Guillaume de Rochefort, rose to deliver the inaugural address. His task—it was no easy one—was to imbue his audience with a due sense of the importance of the occasion without directing its attention to thorny questions or inviting it to activities which might prove embarrassing to the Court. Opening with an adroit appeal to the nascent sentiment of national pride, he dwelt upon the beauties and advantages of France and the admirable characteristics of her people, laying special emphasis upon the loyalty and devotion to the Crown which distinguished them from their neighbours, the English, the annals of whose Royal House he described as a record of incessant change accomplished amid orgies of crime. 'Consider, for instance', he said, 'what happened in that country after King Edward's death; how his children were murdered with impunity, and the Crown was transferred to the assassin by the goodwill of the nation.' [2] The

et sur l'excusation que lesdits prélas ont faicte qu'ils vuellent attendre M. le Cardinal de Tours; a esté dit que, pour ung jour, on les attendra encores, sinon que on besognera ès article de l'Église contenu ou grant cayer, comme on a fait à ceulx de la noblesse et du commung estat.'

[1] *E. g.* Burgundy, Dauphiné, Provence, and Roussillon. Flanders withheld its deputation until towards the close of the session, and Brittany sent, not a deputation, but an embassy.

[2] Masselin, *Journal*, p. 38. If this speech cannot be said to furnish evidence of Richard III's guilt, yet, made on a solemn occasion by a responsible statesman, and within a few months of the event, it may be regarded as a formidable obstacle in the path of Richard's apologists. The speaker's views were those commonly held in France on the matter; see Commynes, *Mémoires*, ed. de Mandrot, vol. i, p. 59.

tragedy pointed a sharp contrast with the position of their own child sovereign, whose confident trust in his subjects had led him to summon them to his presence, that the affairs of the country might be ordered for the best by the mutual co-operation of King and people.

This exordium brought the speaker to the subject of past and future reform, his object here being to bring into relief the more popular features of the official programme. Admitting that much still remained to be done, he claimed that much had already been accomplished by the Government, whose chief desire was to lighten the taxpayer's burden. Not only had it reorganized the administration of the finances, and resumed demesne lands sacrificed by improper alienations in the past, but it had also profited by the success of its foreign policy to initiate important economies in the military sphere, many companies having been disbanded and the Swiss mercenaries having been dismissed. Further, the Council had examined the disorders in the Church, to which it intended to apply a remedy, and it had scrutinized the judicial machinery with a view to the reformation of abuses; old statutes had been modernized, and new legislation would be submitted for approval. Having thus contrived to eulogize the existing Government without defending the detested régime of Louis XI, the Chancellor went on to prescribe the duties and powers of the States. Their co-operation was desired in the redress of grievances, the reform of abuses, and the suppression of all violence and wrong; effect would be given to their recommendations; and it was for them to proceed without fear or favour to provide for the welfare of King and Commonwealth, to secure peace and unity, and to contrive the welfare of the Church and the good government of the nation.[1]

In conclusion the Chancellor indicated for the guidance of the States the order of their deliberations. They were first to address themselves to such matters as concerned the King's Majesty and the welfare of the realm. They could then pass to affairs of provincial, municipal, and personal interest, which ought not to be confounded with

[1] Masselin, *Journal*, pp. 64–5: 'ut rex, resque publica, pax, unio, status ecclesiae, politia vobis curae sint.'

more general topics. Finally the speaker assured the States that the King might be approached as often as might be wished, for his desire was to be accessible to all classes of his subjects.

This speech was the official expression of the Royal pleasure upon which depended the whole scope and character of the coming labours of the States. Judged from that point of view, it left little to be desired : a wide field was thrown open to the activities of the national representatives, and the most zealous champion of parliamentary institutions might hope to find an outlet for his energies in the nomination of a Protector, in the constitution of the Council, in the reorganization of the administrative, fiscal, and judicial machinery, and in the reform of the Church. Of the variety and importance of the questions implicitly or explicitly submitted for consideration no doubt could be entertained ; but it was less certain that an assembly without settled procedure, parliamentary traditions, or experience of affairs could rise to the level of the task which awaited it. So indifferently equipped was it, indeed, that the first session (17 January) had to be devoted to the question of procedure, upon which opinion was sharply divided. In some quarters it was thought that the great interests at stake demanded collective deliberation by the whole assembly ; but in others it was objected that the greater those interests were, the less were they suited for debate in a large body, where innumerable speeches and diverse views would render a general conclusion impossible of attainment. Put forward with the authority which belonged to the Paris deputation, this latter opinion finally prevailed, and for the purpose of preliminary discussion the States resolved themselves into six sections or ' nations ' corresponding to the general lines of division of the fiscal areas controlled by the six Generals of Finance.[1] Before

[1] (i) Paris (including Picardy, Champagne, Vermandois, Senlis, Sens, Meaux, Melun, Montargis, Chartres, the Orléanais, Nivernais, Auxerrois, the Mâconnais, and Mantes) ; (ii) the Duchy and County of Burgundy (including Charolais, Bar-sur-Seine, and the adjoining districts) ; (iii) Normandy, (including Alençon, Perche, Pontoise, Chaumont, and Magny) ; (iv) Aquitaine (including Armagnac, Foix, the Agenais, Périgord, Quercy, and Rouergue) ; (v) Languedoc (including Dauphiné, Provence, Roussillon, and Cerdagne) ; and (vi) Languedoil (composed of Berri, Poitou. Anjou, Maine,

separating, the deputies also disposed of another important preliminary by electing the Abbot of Saint-Denis to the presidential chair. The decision was unanimous, and seemed to be warranted by the candidate's abilities, learning, ecclesiastical rank, and position as senior member of the deputation of the capital ; but in fact the choice was unfortunate, as the more enlightened members were soon to discover.

The deputies then betook themselves to their labours, and the rest of the month was devoted, first to the drafting of the sectional *cahiers*, and then to their reduction into one comprehensive statement of petition and remonstrance for presentation to the King. This done, they passed to the general questions which awaited consideration at their hands, incomparably the most important of which were the constitution of the Council and the appointment of a Protector or Guardian of the Royal Person. Upon the solution of these problems, as the deputies well knew, the future of the country would depend, and to it they now addressed themselves, not without fears for the storm of personal animosity and provincial jealousy which their deliberations were likely to produce, and doubts whether in an inexperienced, timid, and partly corrupt body it were reasonable to expect the high political qualities, the courage, tact, and firm yet prudent resolve, by which alone a satisfactory solution could be attained. And, indeed, when the sectional debates began (4 and 5 February), their animated and protracted character showed plainly how faint was the hope of harmonious agreement, and how hostile to independence of action was the prevalent dread of incurring the displeasure of the Princes.

The deputies of Paris pointed out that a Council of fifteen had already been nominated, by which the Government had been carried on since Louis XI's death and the States-General summoned : they thought that these nominations ought to be confirmed, either in their entirety or in so far as they might be approved by the Dukes of Bourbon and Orleans, but that the Council should be completed by the appointment of nine new members, to be selected by the Princes from a list furnished by the States.

Touraine, the two Limousins, the two Auvergnes, the Bourbonnais, Forez, Beaujolais, Lyon, Angoumois, Saintonge, La Rochelle, and Loudon).

Though marked by transparent deference to the Princes, the opinions of Burgundy and Languedoc evinced a rather more manly desire to preserve the authority of the States; whilst willing to retain twelve members of the existing Council, they proposed to add as many new members, selected, not by the Princes, but by the popular assembly.

Accustomed to provincial liberty, and proud of its privileges, the Norman section was animated by a very different temper. In their view, a tame acceptance of existing arrangements, as advocated by the Parisians, would be treason to the popular cause; the Council contained too many men who had seized upon times of national difficulty to feather their own nests; and there could be no hope for the future of the country so long as knaves and traitors enjoyed any share in its government. They disclaimed, it is true, any intention of prejudicing the authority and privileges of the Princes, upon whose forbearance the powers of the assembly might be thought to depend; neither did they propose to set themselves up as judges of any man's fitness for the Council board. Their view was that each section of the States should elect three representatives, that a committee of eight should be appointed by the existing Council, that the representatives of the States and the nominees of the Council should proceed to the joint election of a Council of 24 or 36 members, and that the new Council, when thus constituted, should take an oath of office before the States.

Jean Masselin, Canon of Rouen, and president of the Norman section, from whose *Journal* our knowledge of their proceedings is mainly derived, entertained a firm, and perhaps not an unreasonable, belief that with some honesty and energy on the part of the President the States-General might have achieved united action on the basis of the Norman proposals. Those proposals upheld the authority of the national representatives; they injured no susceptibilities; they commended themselves to the judgement of two other sections, namely, Languedoil and Aquitaine; and they were regarded with favour in influential quarters. That very morning the Seneschal of Normandy had been summoned to the Royal *château* at Montils, where M. de Beaujeu had indicated his sympathy with the bolder claims

advanced on behalf of the States, and had expressed the view that the Council ought to be appointed by the representatives of the people, since it would be impossible to avoid serious discord, if an unfettered right of nomination were left to the Princes. The same opinion was held by the wisest and most experienced Councillors; they were acutely dissatisfied by the presence at the board of the young, incapable, and untrustworthy men who had begun to come in under the wing of the great lords; and they saw no means of purging the Council but by having recourse to the authority and arbitration of the States.

Fortified by this support, the Normans now amended their previous suggestion, which had been more or less tentative, and put forward more definitive proposals. The Council, they urged, should consist of thirty-six members, of whom twelve might be selected by the Princes from the existing board, whilst the residue were to be chosen by the States. Touching the latter, they thought that it would not be unfair if each section were to have four nominations; but if this allocation should be unacceptable to the Parisians, they were willing that Normandy, Burgundy, and Guyenne, as being numerically inferior, should restrict themselves to three nominations apiece. Should it be objected that thirty-six was rather a formidable number, their reply would be that a regular attendance of Councillors could not be looked for, and a moment's reflection would show the folly of entrusting the government to a handful of men, many of them deterred by private concerns from discharging their public duties.

Such was the posture of affairs when an incident occurred which aggravated the difficulty of the situation. On the 6th February a deputation from the Court presented itself, and submitted an authorized roll of Councillors [1] for the

[1] The list was as follows: Beaujeu, d'Albret, Dunois, Richebourg, Torcy, Louis d'Amboise, Bishop of Albi, des Cordes (d'Esquerdes), Gié, Genlis, du Lau, Baudricourt, and Comminges, with the subsequent addition of Saint-Vallier, the Bishop of Périgueux, and d'Argenton (Commynes). It was a matter of common knowledge in the States that the Bishop of Coutances, the Sieur de Boissy, and others of whom no mention was made had been in the habit of regular attendance, and that the gentlemen in the suites of the Dukes of Bourbon and Orleans were accustomed to record their votes as though members of the Council.

guidance of the assembly. The step seemed to be meaningless unless construed as an intimation that the whole list was to be accepted intact, and Masselin was dispatched to Court, to discover, if he could, whether this might be its true significance. The Duke of Bourbon, whom he approached first, repudiated the notion with emphasis; there was no intention whatever, he averred, of fettering the liberty of the States. The Duke of Orleans was less explicit, but he was about to set out for a dinner party when Masselin presented himself, and was reluctant to be detained. For a month past Tours had been scandalized by the young Duke's noisy entertainments and his 'fillettes de joye'; his character was becoming familiar; and observers less shrewd than Masselin knew what attitude he might be expected to adopt when public business clashed with private pleasure. Upon the present occasion, however, it may be surmised that his levity was prompted not so much by haste as by pique. When the States met again on the 9th February, they were categorically informed that, since their projected constitution of the Council did not safeguard the pre-eminence due to his rank, the Duke of Orleans preferred that his name should be altogether omitted.

Drawing such comfort as they might from the upshot of their spokesman's mission, the deputies plunged once more into the mazes of the interminable discussion. Most of them were heartily weary of the whole affair, and the reader is perhaps in no better case; but it is only by following them step by step along their arid path that we can correctly measure the extent of their inherent ineffectiveness. Provincial jealousy and personal ambition barred the road of progress. The main obstacle to agreement appeared to lie in the craven spirit of the Parisians, and eloquent appeals were addressed to their pride, to their interest, and to their patriotism; but to argument and entreaty alike they turned a deaf ear. They would neither express an opinion on the roll of Councillors which had been submitted, nor concern themselves in any way with the constitution of the Council, touching which they maintained that a free hand should be left to the Princes. The Burgundians, on the other hand, were now inclining to the

Norman standpoint. In the first place, they assigned a seat at the Council-board to every Prince of the Blood, his precedence to be determined by the degree of his relationship to the sovereign. Secondly, of the names on the authorized roll they proposed to retain twelve, the selection to be made either by the Princes or by the States, as might be determined by the former. Next, they advocated the addition of twelve new Councillors, chosen, two by each section, from the States; and they recommended further that the whole body of Councillors thus appointed should be given power to increase, but not to diminish, its numbers. Finally, their report glanced at the vexed question of the Protectorship, which the other sections had either shirked altogether or had handled with irresolution: they thought that the government ought to be carried on in the King's name, but that he should possess no right of personal action apart from the approval of a majority of the Council. Had this recommendation been adopted, and could it have been enforced, the delicate question of the guardianship of the young King would have been shorn of half its difficulty, for it was the natural apprehension that the officially appointed guardian might usurp all the powers of government which made the guardianship problem so important and yet so difficult of solution for the States. Patriots like Masselin believed that the Burgundian views might easily have been brought into harmony with the recommendations of the Norman section, in which Aquitaine and Languedoil had already concurred; but where speedy action was imperative, precious time was negligently or culpably wasted, and in sections honeycombed with intrigue, confusion deepened as the hours passed. One after another Languedoc, Languedoil, and Aquitaine proceeded to reopen the whole discussion, and to go back on the decisions at which they had arrived, the last-named veering round to the Parisian view that a selection of Councillors by the States would be an unconstitutional usurpation of the prerogatives of the Crown, whilst the others, rent by internal dissensions, failed entirely to reach a practicable conclusion. As the morrow was fixed for the Royal session at which the recommendations of the States were to be presented, it was eventually decided to request

time for further consideration upon the ground of the infinite difficulty by which the Council question was surrounded.

As Masselin pathetically remarks, the tiresome affair was like a seven-headed Hydra; no sooner had one head been removed than two new ones appeared in its place. The Parisians had at first been alarmed by the growth of hostile opinion in the other sections, but when they became aware of the recent revulsion of feeling among some of them, they sought by a change in their own position to turn the situation to their advantage. Hitherto they had advocated a sectional treatment of the main questions submitted, and it was at their instigation that this procedure had been adopted by the States. Alleging a great diversity between the sections in the size and number of the provinces which they severally comprised, they now (11 February) declared an invincible repugnance to a continuance of discussion upon a sectional footing. That they did actually cherish inflated notions of their superior consequence as compared with the other sections is likely enough, but their sudden *volte-face* was induced by other considerations. They wanted the Council to be composed of men drawn from their own districts, and this result they thought that they were most likely to achieve by securing the acceptance of the official roll of Councillors. They were aware that the spirit of local jealousy by which their section was permeated would render improbable a judicious choice of Councillors; each district was determined that the nominees of the section should be drawn from its own deputies; the Picard would not elect the Parisian, nor would Champagne defer to Orleans. They were therefore incapable of profiting by the statesmanlike conduct of the Normans, who strove to placate them by suggesting that Paris and Languedoc should each have the right of nominating twice as many Councillors as any other section. The Normans deplored the prolonged dissensions which were not only preventing agreement about the Council, but were also detaining the States from beneficent activity in other spheres of work. At the same time they knew that a failure here would be the prelude to irretrievable misfortune; and it was the conflicting influences of these considerations which had

produced the conciliatory yet resolute attitude maintained by this section throughout the prolonged deliberations.

Some compromise would have to be arrived at, if an agreement were ever to be reached, and two delegates from each section were appointed to meet at the President's house in the hope that a handful of men might be easier to bring into line than the unwieldy bodies which they represented. The evening passed in a long and acrimonious debate, at the end of which a conclusion seemed to be as remote as ever; but in the morning calmer counsels prevailed, and an article was at length drafted for presentation to the King in the name of the States. The article[1] expressed the opinion that in view of the King's age the Privy Council should govern in his name, 'and so that no other person should have any species of authority in any matter whatsoever'. It then directed that the Princes should preside over the Council in the absence of the sovereign, and settled their precedence: first, the Duke of Orleans, 'the second person in the kingdom'; next, the Duke of Bourbon, Constable of France; then the Sieur de Beaujeu; and finally the other Princes of the Blood, ranking according to their degree of affinity with the sovereign. The mention of Beaujeu's name furnished the occasion for a graceful tribute to his ability, zeal, and invaluable familiarity with national affairs. The article then professed the reluctance of the States to tamper with the official roll of Councillors, glanced at the vexed question of the Protectorship, and concluded: 'in order that the Council may be adequate for the great affairs of the kingdom, the States are of opinion that over and above the said roll there should be named twelve or more discreet and learned men of good report, chosen by the King and Council from the several sections of the States'; thus constituted, the Council should be entrusted with the whole power of the Crown; and the delicate matter of the King's *entourage* should be left to its decision.

It is in the nature of compromises that they secure acceptance, but elicit no enthusiasm. The article thus painfully evolved was no exception to the rule. Drafted by the States, not objected to either by the Beaujeus or

[1] Masselin, *Journal*, pp. 701–5.

by the Princes, and accepted by the Chancellor on behalf of the King, it yet settled little and pleased no one. It asserted the authority of the States, but in a timorous fashion and without maintaining it; it failed to determine the quarrel between the Beaujeus and Orleans; and in the vital matter of the Protectorship it arrived at a conclusion which was unobnoxious merely because it was impotent. In all these respects it played into the Beaujeus' hands. The great danger by which they had been confronted was the likelihood of a concurrence between the Princes and the States for the purpose of eliminating from the Government all the elements which made for a continuance of the hated régime of the late King. This peril they had now safely surmounted, whilst for the Princes a failure to win a positive victory in the States amounted to actual defeat. Nothing had been given to the Duke of Orleans but what it was impossible to refuse to his rank, and the essentials of power remained within Madame's grasp.

At the root of the interminable controversies about the constitution of the Council there had lain the delicate question of the authority of the national assembly, upon which opinion within the States was sharply divided. One party among the deputies, predisposed by timidity or complaisance to belittle the constitutional status of the popular assembly, maintained that the government during a minority devolved of course, not upon the deputies as representatives of the nation, but upon the Princes of the Blood as legitimate guardians of the throne; that no constitutional law required the consent of the States in any matter whatsoever, unless it were the imposition of taxes; and that, if opportunities for action had presented themselves, they had proceeded entirely from the generosity of the Princes. Another party would have none of these servile views, and declared that the States were the seat of supreme authority in the kingdom; if their petitions were couched in the language of request, it was merely for form's sake and because the deputies individually were inferior in rank to the Princes; but it was the province of the States to decree and command, at all events until they had instituted a Council, and invested it with their own sovereign power. In the debate of 9th February a reasoned defence of the

liberal position was advanced by Philippe Pot, Seigneur de la Roche, a deputy of Burgundy, in a speech of remarkable interest.

'The desire which most of you entertain', he said, 'to comprehend the true status of our assembly emboldens me to convey to you as briefly as I can the lessons of wisdom and experience concerning the authority and liberty of the States, and I hope to convert to more rational views those of you who are so alarmed by this duty of selecting Councillors that you would flee from it as from a conflagration or other imminent peril. Before expounding my own views, however, I must refute the opinions of my opponents, and I will deal first with those who consider that the care of the King and kingdom belongs to the Princes of the Blood. To which Princes would they give it? To the heir-presumptive to the throne? No, they say, for that would be an obvious inducement to the guardian to conspire against his ward, and it has been expressly prohibited by the law. Their conclusion, therefore, is that the government should be entrusted to the nearest relative, and to the next nearest should be assigned the guardianship of the King's person. But no arrangement of that kind can protect the King from conspiracies; and even if it did in some feeble degree contribute to his safety, it would find no sanction in the law, no support in present facts, and no countenance in earlier precedents.

'I turn to the equally futile and still more dangerous arguments of my other opponents, who assign the Regency and Protectorship to the whole body of Royal Princes. Who are these Princes? Do they include those descended from the Royal House in the female line? Truly, a goodly company! Even if they be limited to the male line, could any unity of action be expected of them, or any guarantees for the maintenance of justice and equity? A vague partition of power among a group of Princes could lead only to contentions and armed affrays, and nothing would come of it but illegal tyranny. The throne is an office of dignity, and not an hereditary possession,[1] and as such it

[1] The questions debated in the States are very similar to those which arose in the British Parliament in the Regency debates of 1788, when the King's madness made it necessary to consider 'what precedents there were of

does not pass to the nearest relatives in the way in which a patrimony passes to its natural guardians. If, then, the commonwealth is not to be bereft of government, the care of it must devolve upon the States-General of the realm, whose duty it is, not to administer it themselves, but to entrust its administration to worthy hands.

'History and tradition tell us that Kings were originally created by the votes of the sovereign people, and the Prince is placed where he is, not that he may pursue his own advantage, but that he may strive unselfishly for the welfare of the nation. The ruler who falls short of this ideal is a tyrant and a wolf, and is no true shepherd of his flock. Have you not often read that the commonwealth is the people's common concern ?[1] Now if it be their concern, how should they neglect it and not care for it ? Or how should flatterers attribute sovereign power to the Prince, seeing that he exists merely by the people's will ? And so I come to the question under discussion, namely, to the problem which arises when a King by infancy or otherwise is incapable of personal rule. Now we are agreed that the commonwealth is the people's ; that our King cannot himself govern it ; and that it must be entrusted to the care and ministry of others. If then, as I maintain, this care devolves neither upon any one Prince, nor upon several Princes, nor upon all of them together, it must of necessity return to the people from whom it came, and the people must resume a power which is their own, the more so since it is they alone who suffer from the evils of a long interregnum or a bad regency. I do not suggest that the right of government is taken from the sovereign. I argue only that government and guardianship, not rights and property, are for the time being transferred by law to the people and their representatives ; and by the people I mean all subjects of the Crown, of what rank soever they be. If, then, you will regard yourselves as the deputies of all the estates of the realm and the depositaries of the aspirations

measures taken to carry on the government, when the personal exercise of the royal authority had been prevented or interrupted by infancy, sickness, infirmity, or otherwise' : see Lecky, *History of England*, Ch. 16.

[1] 'Nonne crebro legistis rempublicam rem populi esse ?' Masselin, *Journal*, p. 146.

of them all, you cannot avoid the conclusion that the main object of your convocation is to direct the government by your counsels in the vacancy which has arisen through the minority of our sovereign. To this were you bidden by the letters which convened the States and by the speech which the Chancellor delivered in the presence, and with the approval, of King and Princes. Nothing could more clearly refute the opinions of those who hold that we have been summoned here merely to vote taxation, and are not concerned with other objects—opinions contradicted by the traditions of the constitution as well as by the course of events.

'Some one will object, perhaps, that since the beginning of the reign the Princes have constituted a Council, carried on the government, and managed State affairs without having been obliged to consult the States. The answer is that the States could not be called together at a moment's notice, and that some provisional arrangements had to be made. So the Princes ruled until the States met; but to-day the States are assembled, and to them the supreme power now belongs. It is for us to confirm the acts of the past and to provide for the future. In my view, that which has been done can have no authority until the States have sanctioned it; nor can any institution rest upon a safe and pure foundation, if established against their wishes or without their express or tacit consent.

'The States-General are no new thing, and there is no novelty about a delegation of government to a Council selected from their midst. When the succession was in dispute between Philippe de Valois and Edward of England, the States adjudicated upon the controversy, and their decision was our true answer to the English claims. During the misfortunes of John's captivity the States assumed the whole burden of government, although the King's son, Charles, was twenty years of age. Or you may pass from these earlier precedents to facts within living memory, and recall how the country was governed and administered through the States when Charles VI succeeded to the throne at the age of twelve. The authority of the States is, then, based both upon precedent and upon reason, and there is no cause to be afraid of putting our hands to the nomination

of a Council. It is a task upon the accomplishment of which the future of the country—its welfare or ruin—depends. You are here to declare freely what God and your consciences tell you is for the country's good; and if you shirk the fundamental question, your whole edifice will be reared upon the sand. For who then will hear your petitions or receive your remonstrances, or cure your ills, or supply a remedy?

'I shall be asked—But how about the Council appointed on the King's accession? Are we to declare these councillors unworthy of their office? Are we to run counter to the sovereign's will and the Princes' orders? It is true, of course, that Councillors have actually been appointed: well, you can reappoint them; their appointment is provisional and in expectation of your meeting. Now that you have met, are you going to reject as beyond your powers a prerogative which your predecessors enjoyed, and by their steadfastness preserved? There is nothing to hinder you but your own weakness and pusillanimity. Let not any weakness of yours prejudice a liberty which your fathers so jealously guarded. Let it not lead to the ruin of your country, so that you incur the condemnation of posterity, and suffer the glory which should be the meed of your labours to be turned into an eternal shame.'[1]

Masselin tells us that this speech made a deep impression upon the audience, and from that day to this it has given rise to much discussion. Some historians dismiss it summarily as a parrot-like repetition of scholastic platitudes, devoid of political significance and unworthy of the attention which has been bestowed upon it. Others regard it as a political manifesto remarkable for the novelty of its conceptions, the audacity of its phrases, and the breadth of its outlook. The most reasonable view seems to be that it was a clever move by a partisan of the Beaujeus in the interests of his patrons' game. A servant of the Burgundian Government in the days of its former independence, the speaker, like his compatriot, Commynes, had transferred his allegiance to the French Crown; Louis XI had rewarded him with offices and large estates; Anne de Beaujeu had specially exempted him from the operation of the ordinance

[1] Masselin, *Journal*, pp. 140–57 (abridged).

which decreed restitution of demesne lands ; it was by her personal intervention that his return as a deputy of Burgundy had been secured ; and after the States had been dismissed, he was appointed governor of his province.[1] In these circumstances it is not unreasonable to surmise that his efforts were really directed to defeating the pretensions of the Duke of Orleans as heir presumptive to the throne, and that his wide claims on behalf of the States were advanced in the belief that this body, if it could be induced to act, would perpetuate the Beaujeu ascendancy as the most likely means of promoting moderation and stability in the government. An examination of the speaker's probable motives therefore restrains the critic from according to his eloquence the astonished admiration which in itself it appears to demand. Nevertheless, when all deductions have been made and all explanations given, the speech still remains unrivalled, and indeed altogether unapproached, in the records of political oratory under the *ancien régime*. The speaker's lucid, terse, and nervous style stands out as clearly from the diffuse and laboured oratory of his contemporaries as his lofty conception of ordered liberty soars above the confused and hesitating thought of his time. Nor should it be forgotten that the bold enunciation of a great principle, be the author's motives what they may, must always operate to give that principle a firmer hold upon the consciences and minds of men.

Concurrently with their discussion of the Council question the States had proceeded with the drafting of their general *cahiers*, and in the sessions of the 10th and 12th February these were publicly rehearsed. It is not possible to enter in detail here into the social and economic conditions with which their petitions and remonstrances dealt ; but no account of the States could be complete which

[1] He acquired wide popularity in Burgundy by the wisdom and equity of his rule, and became a legendary hero of the district. It was universally believed there that, when a prisoner of the Turks in early manhood, he had been given the choice between abjuring his faith and meeting a lion in single combat, and, choosing the bolder course, had slain the monster with a blow of his scimitar. The tale was a fable, invented at Citeaux : see Rossignol, 'Hist. de Bourgogne sous Charles VIII,' in the *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, Arts, et Belles-Lettres de Dijon*, Second Series, vols. iv and ix.

omitted reference to their comprehensive statement of grievances; and I therefore propose to sketch them in general outline.

The mischiefs affecting the Church were attributed by the States to the late King's disregard of the instrument known as the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges, by which Charles VII had attempted to limit in favour of the Crown the growing pretensions of the Papacy. In the face of Papal claims to nominate to vacant bishoprics and benefices the Pragmatic Sanction had reaffirmed the ancient rights of canonical election, royal nomination, and private patronage, and the great clerical charter was thus equally precious to the lower clergy, who resented the intrusion of a Romanizing episcopate, to the lawyers, who desired to abolish all foreign encroachments upon the power of the Crown, and to the nobility, whose influence increased in proportion as Papal interference was restrained. Under Louis XI, however, there had been an inversion of the usual rule by which Gallicanism, or a policy of hostility to Rome, had flourished in periods of monarchical progress, for Louis [1] had disliked the feudal influence over the Church which the provisions of the Pragmatic Sanction tended to revive, preferring that authority should remain with the Pope, with whom he could make terms. In demanding the reversal of the ecclesiastical policy of the late King, the States described its attendant evils. They complained that all the abuses proscribed by the Councils of Constance and of Bâle and by the Pragmatic Sanction had sprung to life again as a result of Louis' policy. Ecclesiastical preferment had been given at Rome to men without letters, and sometimes even to persons who were not ordained; reversions had been sold to the highest bidder; then on the occurrence of the expected vacancy chapters and patrons had elected or appointed without reference to the action of the Pope; their nominees had entered into possession in defiance of the claims of the Papal candidates; the interminable conflicts which ensued had led to anarchy; and anarchy in turn had fostered the corruption from which it sprang. The States not only considered that sales of reversions and

[1] Compare the policy of Henry VI, in England, where the Acts of Provisors and Praemunire became almost a dead letter in the fifteenth century.

grâces expectatives were in themselves vicious, but they believed also that the export of cash [1] resulting from this system and from other Papal exactions was directly responsible, at least in part, for the poverty-stricken condition of the country. They also condemned the pluralities which were associated with the principle of grants *in commendam*, and deplored the decay of provincial church councils, which had been suffered to fall into desuetude. With all proper respect, therefore, for the See of St. Peter they demanded that the rights, privileges, prerogatives, and immunities of the Gallican Church should be restored.

The States demanded likewise the restoration of the rights, privileges, and jurisdictions of the noble order. Subjected as they had been to special persecution at Louis XI's hands, the nobles might with justice complain that almost every act in the late reign had been designed to attack their power, diminish their influence, or injure their traditions. Their most serious grievances were connected with the question of military service. The nobles complained that, whereas they ought to be called out only in defence of the kingdom and by the personal act of the King after due debate in the Council, they had during the last reign been the victims of incessant summonses to the *ban et arrière-ban*, mostly of a frivolous and vexatious nature. This service was unpaid, and the cost of performing it had steadily risen, while the revenues of their class had declined, for the employment by the Crown of paid troops had obliged the feudal lords on their part to remunerate the retainers who in former times had followed them gratuitously to the field. They therefore demanded that they should not be called out arbitrarily, and that, when summoned, they should be paid a reasonable gratuity, each according to his rank, so that they might not be obliged to live on the country. They complained, too, that their tenants were compulsorily enlisted by the King's officers under the Royal banners, whilst they themselves had been deprived both of the offices in the Royal Household which were their due and of the command of fortresses

[1] The 'évacuation de la pécune' was resented all the more bitterly in that cash and bullion were alone held to constitute true wealth in the economic theory of the day.

which used to be entrusted to them, but had lately been given to strangers and *parvenus* in contempt of their prescriptive rights. Finally, they petitioned for the restoration of their forest privileges and for some measure of relief whereby the tottering financial fortunes of their order might be restored. During the late reign the subaltern agents of despotism had harassed and persecuted the noble who had ventured to hunt, and not only had King Louis reserved for himself the hunting rights over the greater part of the kingdom, but his officers also had arrogated to themselves the Royal privilege of hunting in the coverts of the *hauts justiciers* precisely as if invested with a right which in fact pertained only to the King in person. The result had been that the ruin of agriculture had gone hand in hand with the persecution of the hunting class ; freedom had been the prerogative, not of men, but of beasts ; and the wild animal had been safe from molestation, however noxious its depredations might be. In the matter of their financial position the nobles asked for a modification of the contracts into which most of them had been constrained to enter, and which now threatened them with the loss of their landed estates. Of recent years there had been a general movement among a class ruined by generations of warfare to raise cash by conditional sales of its lands with provisions for repurchase ; but the feudal Micawber had been disappointed in his hope that some happy accident would rid him of his embarrassment ; and the redemption dates had come and gone without anything occurring to replenish the empty treasure chest. The nobles therefore desired that existing contracts might be so modified as to restore and prolong the rights of redemption which had already been extinguished or were in danger of extinction. It would be a serious matter for the order if its territorial fortunes were to follow in the wake of an independence which had vanished and of a political power which was fast slipping away.

Such were the grievances of the privileged orders. Serious as they undoubtedly were, they did not compare either in gravity or in number with the evils under which the commons had groaned during Louis' ill-omened tenure of the throne, and the remonstrances formulated by the *Tiers*

État touched upon almost every aspect of the national life. Awakening at length to hope and courage after the long nightmare of silence, repression, and despair, the representatives of the people poured forth their woes in a torrent of angry indignation, and complained in no uncertain voice of fiscal oppression, of judicial abuses, of uncertainties and obscurities in the laws, of commercial restriction and repression, of an overwhelming burden in the liability to military service, and of a general system of neglect, injustice, and misgovernment.

In the matter of taxation the people reproached the Government with the illegal imposition of taxes, with their oppressive character, with their inequitable incidence, and with the extortion and violence which characterized their collection. Louis XI had made no pretence of adhering to the time-honoured custom which had decreed in a happier age that the cost of government should be defrayed out of the legitimate revenues of the Crown. Though engaged in constant warfare, and for ever swelling the ranks of his mercenary army, he had yet thrown economy to the winds, had recklessly alienated the demesne to enrich his favourites, and had showered pensions on his creatures. The result had been a constant increase throughout the reign in all forms of taxation, and *tailles*, *aides*, and *gabelles* had risen to a level which constituted an intolerable burden. Crushing in itself, taxation, too, was rendered all the more odious by the patent inequalities in its incidence. Without any accurate census of population or returns of property, the Government worked in the dark in the matter of apportionment ; they assessed a province at a specified sum without knowing or caring how the burden would fall upon the individual taxpayer ; and there were glaring injustices, not only as between province and province, but even as between one district and another.[1] In denouncing the methods of the tax collectors, which made the official as baneful to the people as the impost which he administered, the States roundly declared that the *gabelles*, which incurred

[1] In March 1492 it was 'conclud et deliberé de savoir à la verité quel nombre de feux il y a en chacune des ellections et pays de nostredict royaume. . . . Ce qui nous meut de ce faire est pour garder equalité entre nosdicts subgectz et que les ungz ne soient foulez pour soulaiger les autres' : *Lettres de Charles VIII*, vol. iii, p. 245.

their special detestation, had furnished pretexts for every species of abomination and atrocity. During the closing days of the late reign more than five hundred persons, they said, had been punished in the districts of Maine, Anjou, and the Chartrain alone, some with heavy fines, and a few even with the penalty of death; in these prosecutions no regular procedure had been followed; and not one of the accused had been accorded a reasonable opportunity of defence.

Passing to the topic of the judicial administration, the States asserted that the magistrates had lost their independence by stooping to serve as the docile instruments of despotism; and in order that justice might be freed from the corruption with which it was tainted, they proposed that modifications should be effected in the position of judges, in the character of the courts, and in the system of laws.

In the matter of the magistracy the States desired that illicit traffic in judicial offices should be abolished, that pluralism should be prohibited, and that magistrates should be elected by their colleagues, adequately remunerated out of the Royal revenues, and guaranteed against dismissal at the caprice of the King. From the time, now about a century back, when magisterial posts had become hereditary in the families of the holders, their transmission had tended to become the subject of bargain and sale, and although ordinances had denounced and prohibited the traffic, custom had triumphed over the law. Indeed, the King himself had created judicial appointments for the express purpose of disposing of them for gain, and the memorial of the States alleged that since the accession of Louis XI 'the said offices have often been conferred upon laymen who have acquired them by purchase; and it has more than once happened in the case of a vacancy that the commission has been delivered in blank to an agent, who has inserted the name of the highest bidder, however unworthy, whereby the administration of justice has been perverted, and wherefrom divers inconveniences, oppressions, and injustices have ensued'. Moreover, even when not sold, offices had frequently been conferred by the King as the guerdon of political service and without regard to

the qualifications of the nominees. 'Provostships and other posts, which ought to be held by men learned in the law, and likewise revenue offices, which call for learning, experience, probity, and circumspection, if the taxpayer is to be assured of justice without fear or favour, have been conferred upon soldiers, huntsmen, foreigners, adventurers, and men without accomplishments or professional experience.' [1] These abuses were to be met with in all the degrees of the judicial hierarchy, and the outcome of them was invariably the same: the occupants of posts purchased at a high price would endeavour to recoup themselves by extorting exorbitant judicial perquisites, the administration of justice had degenerated from an honourable duty to a source of illicit gain, and huge profits awaited unscrupulous audacity. The States therefore demanded that magisterial appointments should be governed, not by favour or fortune, but by the recommendation of the judicial Bench, and that judges should be protected against arbitrary removal at the instance of the Crown. The fundamental principle of all good judicial organization, that the judge should be irremovable, had been proclaimed by the law, but violated by the Government; it ought to be enforced; and deprivation should be permitted only in the event of misconduct incontrovertibly established in due course of law.

Further, the States demanded improvements in the existing judicial machinery. Justice should no longer be sullied by the extraordinary commissions which had enabled Louis to wreak his vengeance through the instrumentality of venal tribunals. Ecclesiastical jurisdictions, and the judicial functions of divers administrative and military officials, which all encroached upon the ordinary course of law, should be restricted within due limits. Bounds should also be set to those transferences of causes to the Royal Council which enabled influential suitors to defeat justice, derogated from the authority of the supreme courts, and imposed crushing expense upon litigants from the more distant parts of the kingdom. Justice should also be freed from the trammels which impeded its even course, such as the need for getting *lettres de grâce* before being able to institute proceedings, or *lettres de justice* before being able to lodge an appeal.

[1] Masselin, *Journal*, p. 682.

'There is no justice to be found', the States declared, 'if the doors of access be not thrown open.' [1]

Realizing the vanity of improving the judicial machinery so long as the legislative system, upon which justice itself was based, remained in need of reformation, the States also pressed for a wider publication of Royal ordinances and for the codification of the various usages which constituted the customary law of considerable portions of the kingdom. The Royal ordinance affected all the subjects of the Crown, but the practice being to communicate it only to the Courts of Parlement and the judicial officers of the Crown, the bulk of those concerned with it rarely became cognizant of its existence, and a secrecy which paved the way for grave abuses deprived the ordinances of the moral weight which is needed as the sanction of every legislative enactment. The States therefore proposed that all laws for the time being in force should be publicly rehearsed at stated intervals in the capital town of each district. The codification of the customary law, for which they also petitioned, was no new idea, having been contemplated for half a century, and actually initiated under the provisions of the ordinance of Montils-les-Tours, enacted in 1454. The work inaugurated by Charles VII had, however, been neglected in his son's reign, and the States proposed, not only that the work of codification should be continued, but also that the various local texts, when duly settled, should be deposited in the tribunals of the several districts, so that they might be accessible alike to the judicial Bench and to the litigant at the bar.

There was one other matter which affected the welfare of the people as nearly as equity and moderation in taxation, purity of justice, and publicity of law, and this was commercial prosperity. Commerce, said the States, 'is the cause and means of bringing riches and abundance to all kingdoms, and without it the commonwealth cannot be preserved in health. The said States are therefore of opinion that merchandise should have free course throughout the realm, and that every merchant should be permitted to trade, not only at home, but also abroad, in countries not hostile to the King, and as well by sea as by land'.[2]

[1] Masselin, *Journal*, p. 686. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 698.

Reality in the commercial world was far removed from the ideal thus adumbrated, the free circulation of commodities being everywhere trammelled by the monopolies of mercantile companies, by the fiscal exactions of the State, and by the tolls levied by feudal seigneurs. Taxes and tolls had been so greatly increased since the reign of Charles VII as almost to strangle commercial enterprise, and the evil was intensified by the practice of farming out the duties to men who did not scruple to enforce illegal demands by arbitrary seizure and confiscation. The States were willing that duties should be levied upon goods imported into the kingdom, but they objected to fiscal restrictions upon domestic commerce, demanded the abolition of all dues and tolls of recent origin, and claimed the protection of the ordinary courts against the illegalities of the tax collectors.

The States-General of 1484 were not destined to inspire one of those historic legislative enactments by which satisfaction was occasionally accorded to the wishes of the people, but although the seed of their constructive proposals appeared at the moment to have fallen upon barren ground, it did in fact bear fruit in the remedial legislation of later days. The immediate sequel to the presentation of their memorial was an incident which destroyed whatever hopes the States might still repose in the benevolence of the Government. In abandoning their claim to nominate their representatives on the Council the States had reserved the right to select the committee of sixteen which was to collaborate with the Council in the examination of their petitions. On the 14th February they learnt that the members of this Committee had been arbitrarily nominated by the Government, and a scrutiny of the composition of the committee did nothing to lessen the disgust with which the States regarded an action which constituted a flagrant encroachment upon their privileges. The committee was, indeed, composed in correct proportions of churchmen, nobles, financiers, and merchants, but instead of being chosen in equal numbers from the several sections, the nominees of the Government were drawn at haphazard from the whole body of the States, and the choice had been made upon no discoverable principle but that of Court

interest : some of them were officials in the service of the Crown, some were notorious self-seekers, some were obscure individuals in whom no independence could be looked for ; and to none of them could the States desire that the safeguarding of their own and the national interests should be entrusted. For a while there was angry talk of a sharp remonstrance accompanied by the election of an independent committee, but the usual obstacles to vigorous action were encountered, and the incident closed with a speech of apology by the Chancellor, which did little to allay the feeling that had been engendered. Henceforward the relation between the Government and the States was to be one of scarcely veiled antagonism : that the Government desired to discard an instrument which had served its turn was shown by its sudden order to dismantle the assembly hall, whilst the deputies for their part were filled with anger, suspicion, and discontent.

The temper prevailing in the States was not conducive to an amicable settlement of the problem of military defence, to which the assembly was next asked to turn its attention (19 February). In this field three different systems contended for the mastery. The nobility desired the restoration of the feudal levy, upon which their local importance and political influence depended. The aim of the Crown was the enlistment of one of those mercenary armies which in every country and in every age are the cherished instruments of despotic authority. Equally opposed to the feudal system, with the evils of which the bitter experience of the past had made them but too familiar, and to the presence of hired troops, which they resented alike as a slur upon the nation's manhood and a standing menace to its liberties, and yet at the same time confronted by the need for some force for national defence, the States advocated a mixed system of gentlemen soldiers and paid troopers, accompanied by safeguards against the worst abuses of the *gens-de-guerre*. Having regard to the unity of the kingdom and the loyal spirit of the people, they proposed to limit the army to the size at which it had been fixed in Charles VII's reign, the *gens d'armes* to be led by captains from whom justice might be obtained in case of need, and to be liable to punishment by the civil

tribunals for offences against the King's lieges. Efficiency, in their view, depended upon organization, not upon numbers; France was rich enough in brave men, who could be relied upon to fly to her protection in the hour of peril; in the hearts of her citizens, not in the arms of hireling troops, lay her best defence; and no strength was so deceptive as that of armed might unsupported by popular affection.

The Duke of Bourbon, who was put up as Constable to reply on behalf of the Council, declared that the military experts who had been consulted upon the numerical limitation recommended by the States, condemned their proposals as inadequate in every particular. The districts annexed by Louis were adjacent to hostile countries; their security could be guaranteed only by the presence of considerable forces; and it would never do just to garrison a few fortresses, when it might at any moment become necessary to repel the incursions of enemy armies. Normandy and Guyenne were exposed to the attentions of the English, always a source of trouble, and now actually collecting an army with a view to invasion; Picardy was open to attack by the Archduke Maximilian, by whom Douai had already been reduced; the Pyrenean frontier had to be held against the Spaniards, whose designs upon Roussillon and Cerdagne necessitated the presence in that region of at least 200 'lances'; [1] and Burgundy had for neighbours the dangerous and treacherous German.[2] In conclusion, the Constable pointed to a force of 2,500 'lances' and 6,000 foot as barely sufficient to meet the requirements of the situation.

Replying on the morrow on behalf of the States, Masselin urged that the question of military defence could not be isolated from other branches of expenditure; it was bound up with the expense of the Household and the cost of the civil administration; and a want of economy in any one department might produce a burden of taxation which the people could not support. So long as they were kept in ignorance of the expenditure under those heads and of the condition of the Treasury, the States would not feel

[1] A 'lance' was the cavalry unit of five men: see note p. 37.

[2] 'Periculosos quidem et male fidos vicinos:' Masselin, *Journal*, p. 314.

themselves qualified to vote taxation; and unless the Treasury would furnish a budget, they must adhere to the view which they had already expressed.

The States contained few members versed in the intricacies of public finance, but when in accordance with Masselin's demand the Treasury officials presented a summary statement of account, it required no great business acumen to comprehend that their epitome was an impudent tissue of misrepresentation and deceit. The duty of criticism was again assigned to Masselin, who discharged it with his habitual directness and perspicacity. In an indictment in which there was no mincing of words he charged the authorities with a flagrant exaggeration of expenditure only less criminal than their fraudulent depreciation of the yield of taxation. The *aides* of Normandy, he declared—and he spoke with the authority of local knowledge—were underestimated by a half; as for the Norman demesne, the income of which was returned at 22,000 *livres*,[1] there were plenty of men in his audience who would gladly pay 40,000 *livres* [1] for the right to farm it; and these falsifications were typical of the whole Treasury statement. He went on to assert that the estimates of expenditure were equally preposterous. Though the King was still a child, they were asked to vote him a Household, a bodyguard, and a civil list twice as large and twice as costly as any yet known; they were expected to sanction an enormous pensions list, though pensions ought to be granted sparingly and as the reward of exceptional service; and they were expected to condone other instances of manifest extravagance. Take, for example, the case of Burgundy: under their former rulers the revenues of the united provinces were managed by one official, who received a salary of 600 *livres*,[1] and had a single clerk under him at a salary of 200 *livres*; now the district rejoiced in a treasurer, who drew 2,800 *livres* a year, a general of finance at the same salary, a receiver-general at 1,200 *livres*, and a comptroller at 600 *livres*; and this horde of functionaries consumed between them no inconsiderable portion of the revenue which they were appointed to administer.

The speaker then reverted to the military proposals of

[1] For values of the *livre* see Appendix, Table I.

the Government, which he had criticized on a previous occasion, and to which he now recurred as illustrative of the prodigality that characterized the official programme. In a time of profound peace within and without the kingdom it was proposed to establish an army of 2,500 ' lances ' with infantry to match, and huge sums were to be squandered in garrisoning towns in the very heart of the kingdom, as though the English could descend out of the air and threaten them with daily attack. No doubt, troops were required for the defence of Picardy, but English ambitions constituted no serious menace to a united nation, and competent judges maintained that the forces for which the States were asked to budget were in excess of all reasonable requirements. One of the great assets of the country was the splendid force of nobles, whose duty was to defend the King and kingdom, and there was no need to employ mercenary troops, who drew their pay from the national purse, and then lived on the people whom they were paid to protect. The inflated taxation of recent years had produced disasters patent to every eye; half the people had fled the country, and the rest were consumed by famine, plague, and misery. In view of the many newly incorporated provinces, the revenues of which had not been available in the time of Charles VII, a *taille* at the Caroline rate ought to be amply sufficient, and the States therefore made a grant of 1,200,000 *livres*[1] a year upon the conditions that it should be equitably assessed, that it should be levied for two years only, and that at the expiration of that period the representatives of the nation should be called together again, to review the situation.

As the deputies were dispersing, an amusing incident pressed home one of Masselin's contentions. As an instance of the inaccuracies in the official budget he had quoted the estimated expenditure of 1,100 *livres* on furnishing the hall in which the States were sitting; and declaring that 300 *livres* would have been an ample provision, he had asked what deceptions must not lie hid in the obscurities of complex accounts, when a simple item under their very eyes had been thus shamelessly manipulated. At the close of the debate a member of the *Tiers État* rose in his place,

[1] About a million and a half sterling in modern money: see Appendix.

and announced that it was he who had been commissioned to furnish both the hall in which they were then sitting and that originally prepared for them, when they were expected to meet at Orleans. 'They tell you', he went on, 'that this hall has cost them 1,100 *livres*. As a matter of fact the two halls together cost no more then 560 *livres*, and they have not paid me a penny yet.'

Five days after Masselin's pronouncement the Chancellor came down to deliver the official reply. Reminding his audience that the *taille* had stood at 4,400,000 *livres* in recent years, and alleging that the King would have been within his rights in maintaining it at that level, he argued that the King's generosity in consenting to a reduction should have evoked their gratitude, and upbraided them with disloyalty for the niggardly and haggling spirit which they were displaying.

Many deputies, as the Chancellor was aware, were anxious to be quit of their parliamentary duties, and the Council thought that it might presume upon the incapacity of the States to offer a protracted resistance; but in its provocative reply it had come near to overstepping the bounds which prudence would have set. The Parisians did, indeed, agree to increase their previous offer by the addition of a *don de nouvel avénement*, but the Burgundians protested loudly against the imposition upon them of the Caroline taxes, which they had never paid, and the other sections were disposed to scout the notion of any increase in their original proposals. Some deputies had never approved of the grant which had been made; others now regretted it, regarding the attitude of the Government as an abuse of their incautious generosity; and reviving the most cherished argument of the taxpayer at this period, they asked why they should pay *taille*, *gabelle*, and *aides*, when former sovereigns had met their expenditure out of the revenues of the demesne. So difficult, however, was it to achieve any unity of action among the sections that in the end the Parisian suggestion was agreed to, a *don de joyeux avénement* of 300,000 *livres* being added to the previous grant upon condition that the assessment should be submitted for approval to committees of the various sections.

When the details of this assessment were produced by the

Generals of Finance[1] (29 February), they elicited a storm of protest from the States, each section declaring that the incidence of the old taxation, which had been taken as a model, was inequitable, and protesting its incapacity to support the burden assigned to it in view of the wretched condition of the people and the innumerable exactions to which they had been exposed. Languedoc pleaded an existing indebtedness of nearly a million *livres* on account of arrears of taxation which it had been unable to raise, and one of its commoners claimed to have paid *tailles* amounting to more than 350 *livres* in two years, which he conceived to be without parallel in any other province; but, as was immediately pointed out, the *taille* in his province was imposed upon realty, not upon personalty, so that a man was taxed, not on his estimated means, but on the land he actually owned, and a heavy assessment was merely evidence of large ownership.

A more cogent plea was advanced by the Picards in that the quota demanded from them was maintained at the exact level of the previous year, namely, 55,000 *livres*, whereas substantial reductions in former assessments had been granted to every other province. The grievance furnished them with an opportunity, of which they eagerly availed themselves, to inveigh against their whole fiscal position. What the province really desired was the abolition of its newly created status as a separate *généralité*, which had aroused intense local disgust; and it declared that, if reabsorbed in the fiscal area to which it had formerly belonged, it would receive tolerable treatment, whilst the burden which it would thus escape would not form an appreciable addition to the taxation borne by its neighbours. Considered as a fiscal unit, Picardy was but a fourth of its geographical dimensions, for some of its districts had been exempted from taxation, whilst others had been incorporated in other *généralités*, and the sum now imposed upon it would fall upon 170 villages at most. And in what

[1] According to the Generals, the assessment was based upon the old budgets, with the modifications consequent upon reduction in taxation. It distributed the burden as follows: Languedoïl (with Aquitaine), 608,300 *livres*; Normandy, 363,910 *l.*; the Ile-de-France, 208,800 *l.*; Languedoc, 186,990 *l.*; Picardy, 55,000 *l.*; Burgundy, 45,000 *l.*; and Dauphiné, 20,000 *l.*; total, 1,488,000 *livres*.

condition were they to support the burden? For seven years Picardy had suffered the countless miseries of a frontier province in time of war; the invader had carried destruction throughout its borders; its people had been slain, its towns destroyed, its agriculture ruined. So barren and miserable was its condition that the troops stationed in it had to be fed on imported food, and even the *gens d'armes* were obliged to be honest for lack of anything to steal. Yet the taxation imposed upon the Picards was much heavier than that of their neighbours. In the vicinity of Amiens, for instance, there were two farmers with adjoining lands and identical means; one of them was assessed in Picardy, and the other elsewhere; and where the latter paid 2 *livres* in taxation, the former paid 3 *livres*. To all this, says Masselin, no real answer was, or could be, made: yet Masselin was not a Picard, and the claims of a province to more lenient treatment were jealously scrutinized by its neighbours, who stood to suffer in proportion as such claims might succeed.

At a loss for an effective reply, the Council took refuge in procrastination, deferring the further consideration of the Picard grievances to a future time, and Masselin was never able to learn how the matter ended. When he left Tours, the Picards had been offered rebates, first of 15,000 *livres*, and then of 20,000 *livres*, but they had rejected both proposals, being resolved to secure treatment identical with that accorded to the other provinces.

No less animated a debate took place when the turn of the Normans came. Masselin's keen local pride may, perhaps, have induced him, as historian of the States, to magnify in his narrative the public spirit of his compatriots, but the Norman deputies would seem to have been the mainstay of liberal opinion in the assembly, and they were not likely to display a submissive temper when confronted by a question that affected then so nearly as their own liability to taxation. They found themselves assessed at 363,910 *livres*, and their grievance was that they were thus expected to carry one quarter of the total indebtedness of the kingdom, though their province formed but a tenth part of it, and was already subjected to onerous *aides*.[1]

[1] The Normans were still complaining of a disproportionately heavy assessment in 1491, when it was 'ordonné de par le roy nostre sire faire une

They claimed a reduction of their assessment by more than one-half. Their misfortunes, at all events in their own estimation, had been incredibly heavy; their province had been the objective of invading enemies and the favoured haunt of predatory *gens d'armes*; war, dearth, and pestilence had brought its fair fields to ruin; and the few Normans who had contrived to keep a coin or two in their pockets had gone off to Brittany or to England. They were upbraided with taking the times of Charles VII as their model, and yet rejecting the Caroline assessment, when applied as a test of their present liability: they answered that that assessment was never in itself equitable, and had now become wholly inapplicable to the altered circumstances of a greatly enlarged kingdom. Taunted also with perverse ingratitude, they rejoined, not without force, that despite their sufferings thay had been moved by their perception of the Royal necessities to waive their undoubted right of voting their contribution in their own provincial Estates, and indignantly inquired whether the Government could point to a like instance of self-effacing loyalty.

Whilst the discussion was in progress, the Norman speakers were subjected to an incessant fire of captious asides from the Treasury officials, and one of them was at length goaded into a fury beyond control. 'Gentlemen of the Treasury,' he broke out, 'what is your notion of justice? Your powers extend over the whole taxation of the kingdom, and your duty is to settle its incidence fairly and without fear or favour: yet you stoop to make a public exhibition of your prejudices—of your bias against one section of the States and your unseemly predilection for the others. My lords of the Council, we challenge this capricious and iniquitous assessment, and entreat you earnestly to withhold your confidence from its authors. We have a special General of our own, whose duty is to protect our interests to the uttermost of his ability: I know not what the cause may be—youth, perchance, or inexperience, or

reserche et reveue des pays et generalitez de Normandie, Languedoc, Languedoil et les pays par decà, pour ce que les Normans se dient trop plus chargez de tailles contre nous:' letter of the Élus of Reims, *Lettres de Charles VIII*, vol. iii, pp. 166–7. Yet in 1546 'Normandia è sempre la più gravata': Tommaseo, vol. i, p. 296.

timidity—but for some reason or other this champion of ours listens in unbroken silence to the calumnies of our evil-wishers. Gentlemen of the Treasury, your predecessors used to admit that Normandy was in no condition to pay heavy taxes, and then they would put the screw on us for all we were worth. I am convinced that they have their reward in the torments of hell; and I infer from what I can see to-day that their successors will soon go and keep them company.'[1]

In the explosive atmosphere thus engendered, Beaujeu thought it prudent to close the discussion. Soon after the deputies had dispersed, the Council sent word that they had considered the Norman remonstrances, and would accord a remission of 13,910 *livres*; they asked, however, that the concession might not be divulged, lest it should confirm the recalcitrance of the other sections; and a hint was dropped that the Normans might with advantage throw dust in the eyes of their colleagues by simulating an air of discontent. The other Committees with whom the Council had been negotiating were then recalled, and were informed that no alteration in their assessments could be tolerated.

In addition to the taxation thus imposed upon them the third estate were required to find a further sum of 50,000 *livres* for the payment of members' salaries. A Troyes lawyer entered a vigorous protest (2 March) against the injustice of throwing upon the shoulders of the people, which already bore the whole burden of taxation, the cost of the salaries of noble and clerical deputies. It was argued, however,—and the recent electoral procedure gave the argument some substance—that every deputy, to whichever class he belonged, was the representative of the people at large; and after a vain appeal from the Chancellor that the deputies of the nobility and clergy should make their service gratuitous or get its cost defrayed by their own orders, it was resolved that the people should continue to meet an expenditure which had always fallen upon them in the past.[2] It is in the attitude maintained by the privileged classes in such matters as this that we may find an explanation

[1] Masselin, *Journal*, pp. 482–3.

[2] In Troyes, so far as can be gathered from a defective MS., the commons resisted the demand made by the noble and clerical deputies for payment of their salaries, upon the ground that it was the practice of each order to pay

of the mutual hostility of the orders and of the difficulty which they experienced in their attempts to compass concerted political action. The nobles and clergy should have had sufficient sagacity to perceive that the question of salaries was one rather of principle than of substance, and sufficient self-denial to act upon their perception. When taxation ran into hundreds of thousands of *livres*, it was no great matter to the commons that the comparatively small cost of parliamentary salaries should be added to their burden; but the more trifling the amount involved, the more monstrous did it seem that the classes which combined wealth with privilege should seek to evade liability; and appeals to precedent could not palliate an injustice which became but the more galling in the repetition.

The days of the States were now numbered. It was the custom of the Government to consider that States-General had performed their one useful function when adequate fiscal resolutions had been wrung from them, and to regard their continued existence thereafter as an inconvenience, if not a menace. The assembly whose fortunes we have followed was now to find itself in this position: it had served its turn, it had tided over a crisis, and it was becoming an embarrassment to the authors of its being. Straws showed how the wind was blowing. A committee appointed to confer with the Chancellor about the judicial reforms advocated by the States was informed that criticism and advice were not desired and would not be tolerated. The plenary sessions of the States themselves were suspended, though much useful work remained unaccomplished, and it was generally understood that the reluctance of the President to convene a meeting was inspired by the Government. On the 7th March a more definite indication was given; the King, it was announced, was suffering from indisposition, and was about to leave Tours. A few days later, on the 12th March, all further doubt was set at rest. The States were officially informed that, as the Council must now devote its attention to urgent affairs, the continued attendance of the deputies would be a cause of

its own representatives: Boutiot, *Documents inédits . . . relatifs aux États Généraux, Collection de Documents inédits relatifs à la Ville de Troyes*, published by the Société Académique de l'Aube (Troyes, 1878), vol. i, p. 7.

useless expense, and their salaries would therefore cease as from the following day. This was only another way of announcing that the States were dissolved.

Thus tamely, in humiliation akin to defeat, ended the labours of an assembly whose fame was yet destined to remain unsurpassed until the advent three centuries later of that great political upheaval in which States-General were to perish for ever in the ruins of the social order from which they had sprung. For those like Masselin who believed that the welfare of the people hinged upon the establishment of a more enlightened polity, the retrospect of the past weeks possessed few encouraging features. Convened in a moment of crisis, when the sceptre wavered in the feeble grasp of a child, favoured by the suicidal jealousies of rival aspirants to power, and fortified by a deep reaction against the excesses of despotic authority, the States had enjoyed a unique opportunity for enforcing the redress of abuses, calling a halt to the encroachments of despotism, and building the structure of ordered liberty upon firm constitutional foundations. This opportunity they had let slip, and their achievement could scarcely be reckoned as even an ephemeral service to the cause of freedom. That cause had made shipwreck once again upon the rocks by which in every age and in all circumstances its course was beset under the *ancien régime*. Once again the unity of the national assembly had been destroyed by the disintegrating forces of class division and local jealousy. To have consolidated their position, the commons must have enlisted the support of the Princes in their opposition to the Crown ; but they dared not embark upon a policy which might promote a recrudescence of seigneurial domination ; nor could they bid for noble succour without forfeiting the sympathies of a people which was happier under the whips of the tax-gatherer and the *gens d'armes* than under the scorpions of its feudal lords. For whilst the remembrance of feudalism endured in the hearts of the people, the workings of its spirit might still be discerned in princely bosoms. 'I know these rogues,' an arrogant old lord had declared during the sessions of the States. 'Treat them to anything but severe taxation, and forthwith they grow insolent. If you spare them in the matter of this *taille*,

they will become unbearable. They are unfit for liberty; therefore you must keep them in subjection; and you cannot accomplish it better than by the retention of this tax.' [1]

To the baneful influence of class antipathy was added the stultifying effect of that spirit of local jealousy which had produced the initial disaster of sectional division, and impeded the States at every turn in the course of their subsequent deliberations. As Masselin points out, its operation was plainly to be discerned, not only in the relations of one section to another, but even within individual sections. 'They comprised', he says, 'absolutely distinct provinces; no one of these trusted any other, each wanted to be represented by its own members, nobody would place any confidence in his neighbour. In the matter of finance especially, which appeared to be the chief reason of our existence, the sections were consumed by mutual distrust, and the sole preoccupation of every man was his fear lest his colleagues should thrust their burden on to his shoulders. So entirely had the taint of money shattered our pristine harmony that we were brought to the verge of open enmity, every man's hand being for his own province, to secure for it favourable treatment *Généralité* was set against *généralité*, bailiwick against bailiwick, *élection* against *élection*, parish against parish, and taxpayer against taxpayer.' [2]

When the States laboured under these disabilities, it required no great measure of finesse for the Beaujeus to direct events along channels of their own choosing, and by a judicious admixture of firmness with cajolery to achieve their ends without suffering the necessity of inconvenient concession. Taxation, indeed, had been voted for a limited period only, and subject to a promise that at the expiration of that period the representatives of the nation should be consulted again; but there was no guarantee that the promise would be observed; and when in fact the time for redeeming it came, it was evaded without difficulty.[3]

[1] Masselin, *Journal*, pp. 420–2. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 456–9.

[3] 'Fut en iceulx estatz ordonné beaucoup de choses touchant le gouvernement et l'administration qui après ne furent pas bien gardées:' Seyssel, *Histoire Singulière du Roy Loys XII*, fo. 55.

The assistance of the Parlement of Paris was then invoked, but the appeal fell on deaf ears in a body which viewed States-General with dislike as aspirants to a position that might diminish its own importance.[1] Selfish though it was, it cannot be denied that the attitude of the Parlement aroused little resentment among the people. For the real truth was that beneath the superficial causes to which the failure of the States-General may be ascribed lay a more deeply seated malady. Despite all that constitutional government stood for, and despite all that it might be expected to achieve in the fruition of hopes and the redress of abuses, the permanence of representative institutions was a matter of indifference to the nation at large, by whom political liberty was not yet desired,[2] and among whom it would not long have endured.

[1] See below pp. 122–5.

[2] 'Niuno [regno è] tanto unito ne tanto obbediente come Francia . . . E sebben la libertà è il più desiderato dono del mondo, nondimeno tutti non sono degni di essa' (Alberi, *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato*, vol. i, p. 232) was the severe judgement of the Venetian ambassador, Marino Cavalli, whose strictures upon the spirit of political subservience displayed by the French in Francis I's time have already been quoted, p. 59.

IV

THE BRETON SUCCESSION

Scarcely had the States been dismissed when grave news reached Tours. An influential party among the Breton nobles had risen against their Duke; the attempt had miscarried; its authors had sought an asylum on French soil; and they now turned to Anne de Beaujeu for protection and succour. The incident was likely to be fraught with grave consequences for her and for the country of which she had become the virtual ruler. On the one hand, the rendering of assistance to the Breton refugees would focus into one centre all the elements of that reactionary opposition to her Government which, embittered by recent defeat, was already seeking an occasion for another trial of strength; and it was certain that she could not incur the enmity of the Breton Duke without coming into violent collision with the party of the feudal Princes over which she had just triumphed in the constitutional struggle at Tours. On the other hand, the question of the Breton succession and of the relations between France and the Duchy was one which must sooner or later be confronted. That a French Prince should rule in virtual independence in Brittany was tolerable, if inconvenient; but that the Duchy should be irrevocably divorced from France by the marriage of its heiress into a foreign house was a contingency that could not for a moment be envisaged by the French Crown. Yet the infirm and prematurely aged Duke was the last male scion of his House,[1] and in existing conditions the contingency might at any time arise. The question was vital for France. With powerful states in process of formation around her, she must achieve the completion of the territorial unity which was a condition of progress; she could not go on in division and disunion without jeopardizing her very existence; and it was essential to her security that the Breton problem should be solved in conformity with her interests. The Breton

[1] See Genealogical Table II at the end of the volume.

succession was thus an affair in which the French were concerned almost as nearly as the Bretons themselves, and as such it attained to international consequence. Its importance to France was the measure of the eagerness with which jealous neighbours would strive to frustrate her purpose; and, in addition to the likelihood of a feudal coalition, Madame, should she intervene in Brittany, must reckon with the danger of foreign war.

For a proper comprehension of the story which we are about to follow it is necessary that the independent position of Brittany, to which some allusion has already been made, should be fully appreciated. The situation of the province was altogether exceptional. Its Dukes ruled there by the grace of God, not by the favour of Kings to whom the Duchy had never belonged, and the suzerainty which they acknowledged was little more than nominal. When they performed homage for the Duchy, they did so erect and armed, they took no oath of fealty, and received no investiture. It was their boast that the rulers of Brittany recognized no creator or sovereign save God Almighty. Their state and position were not so much Ducal as Royal, and their vassals not only acknowledged their sovereignty, but paid them absolute and unconditional homage, with no reservation of their duty to the King. Government and administration were in the hands of the Duke's officers, and nowhere within the province did a Royal official exercise any species of authority. The Duke furnished no military contingent to the Royal army, but disposed as he pleased of his armed forces, made his own treaties of peace, and recognized no obligation to join in the King's wars or to take any share in the defence of the King's dominions. The laws and institutions of the Duchy were its own, voted by its States and promulgated and enforced by its Duke, and no attention was paid in Brittany to the ordinances issued by the King for general application in the kingdom. Absolute master of the revenues of his province, the Duke paid no tribute or subsidy, and no Royal *tailles* or *aides* were levied on his subjects. He was the fountain of justice and of honour: justice was administered in his name and by his tribunals, and it was by him that letters patent of nobility were issued. He was also the supreme temporal

lord of his clergy; the King nominated to no Breton bishoprics or abbeys, and received no temporalities from vacant Breton sees. Deeply imbued with the prevailing sentiment of the province, the Breton clergy had guarded jealously their independence of the French Church. During the troubles of the Great Schism they had never recognized the Avignon Popes, nor had they ever permitted the application within their province of the system of Church government which Charles VII had embodied in the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges. Their relations with the Court of Rome were direct, and when a Pope addressed a bull to the French clergy, he was always careful to send a duplicate to the clergy of Brittany.

The province thus formed no part of the French kingdom in the sense in which those words would be understood to-day. She regarded herself rather as a separate nation than as a fief or vassal state, and the maintenance of her ancient independence had long been an obsession with the majority of her people. Unperceived by themselves, however, their particularist spirit was being gradually undermined by the subtle but persistent influences of a common history, geographical proximity, and intimate political and commercial relations. Though cherishing a national sentiment as fervent and fanatical as that of contemporary Scotland, they were imbued with little of the Scotsman's instinctive hatred for the State that bordered their own, and a consistent policy of resistance to French encroachment had engendered no ineradicable hostility to France herself. The truth was that French influences had gradually permeated the Duchy, and a natural process of peaceful penetration had made the Bretons more French than they knew. French was the language of the Court and of society, of government, justice, legislation, and commerce. If the gentry, the clergy, the civil servants, the lawyers, and the merchants were still familiar with the dialect of the province, they could, and habitually did, converse in the language of the kingdom. The Breton merchant traded with his French neighbours. The Breton statesman could not avoid close political relations with the Government of France. The Breton gentleman had grown accustomed to seek his fortune in the Royal army; and

from the Ducal House downwards there was scarcely a noble family in the province that had not formed marriage connexions in France. In all classes, therefore, above that of the peasants, who were still unaffected in the purity of their Breton blood and the vehemence of their Breton feeling, some greater or less tincture of French influence had begun to leaven the narrow spirit of provincialism ; and the conflict of rival sentiments which resulted from it may clearly be discerned in the varying phases through which the question of the Breton succession was about to pass.

During the reign which had just come to a close the policy of the French Crown had been essentially inimical to the interests of Brittany, as the Bretons understood them, for the steady progress of unification was an evident menace to provincial autonomy, and after the absorption of Maine and Anjou in the Royal demesne the rising tide of centralization had begun to beat against the Breton border throughout its entire length. The danger had not escaped the notice of the Duke's Government, and his favourite, Landois, who ruled the Duchy in his master's name, had embraced the policy of opposition to the Crown upon which Breton independence seemed to hinge. The death of Louis, however, appeared to lessen the imminence of the peril, and inspired in the Bretons, as in most enemies of the old régime, a selfish hope that the new order might be made to fall out to their advantage. In the first months of Charles' reign the Breton Government had therefore affected an attitude of friendliness to France. It was true that no Breton deputies had attended the States-General at Tours, but Brittany had never been represented in the States-General of the kingdom, and in lieu of deputies she had sent an embassy to Tours, upon which Landois himself had served. The instructions given to these ambassadors were to demand that the pay of two hundred 'lances' should be assigned to the Duke, that certain frontier strongholds should be surrendered to him, and that the Crown should relinquish in his favour the Penthièvre patrimony which Louis XI had purchased from the heiress of the House. If any hope was really entertained by Landois that such terms might be wrested from an embarrassed and divided Government, it was dispelled by the outcome of

the political struggle at Tours; and Landois, involved in the intrigues of the Princes, and enraged and alarmed at the triumph of the Beaujeus, had quitted Tours suddenly on the pretext that he stood in danger of assassination.

Not yet desiring an open rupture with the Breton Government, Madame disregarded the conduct of the Duke's Treasurer, continued her negotiations with his colleagues, who remained at Tours, and wrote in cordial terms to Francis II that a French embassy was about to set out for the Breton Court. These ambassadors were appointed towards the end of March; they were Torcy, Commynes, and the Bishop of Périgueux; and on the 5th April the Council furnished them with their instructions.[1] After paying the usual diplomatic compliments, and inviting the Duke to be present at the King's forthcoming coronation ceremony at Reims, they were to deal specifically with the demands which the Duke's ambassadors had advanced. Touching the request for a grant of the pay of two hundred 'lances', they were to explain that a reduction of taxation had been a cherished object of the States, and a military establishment already inadequate to existing demands admitted of no further curtailment. So drastic, indeed, were the measures which the King had taken for the relief of his subjects that his financial position was seriously affected, and, under the pressure of urgent needs, inroads had already been made on the revenues of the coming year. But if the Duke could not be obliged in this matter, he might be sure that his Duchy would be defended with vigour, should occasion arise, for its safety was as dear to the Royal heart as that of any part of the kingdom. As regards the three frontier fortresses for the surrender of which the Duke had asked, it was to be pointed out that such a suggestion was unprecedented: not those three fortresses only, but all the strong places in Normandy, would be open to him, and any Norman captains who might be obnoxious to him could be removed. The restitution of the Penthièvre inheritance was a request to which the Council was deterred from acceding only by a consideration of the extreme youthfulness of the King; and Charles

[1] Valois, *Registre du Conseil, 1484*, Bibl. Éc. Chartes, vol. xliv, pp. 426–31.

would be advised to comply with it, when he came of age. The Duke was then to be invited to give the King the benefit of his counsel on the foreign intelligence which the embassy was to impart to him. In this connexion he was to be informed of the negotiations which were in progress with Spain touching Roussillon and Cerdagne, and he was to be acquainted further that an English envoy, 'Doctor Lonton',[1] proposed shortly to visit the French Court on his way to Rome: he would bring the English news with him, and this the Council would send on to Brittany Lastly, the Duke's exiled kinsman, the Vicomte de Rohan, was to be commended to his favour.

The offer to send English intelligence to the Bretons, whose intimate relations with England were a perpetual menace to France, was plainly an ironical thrust; and it was clear alike from the choice of ambassadors and from the instructions with which they were furnished that the French embassy was not to be taken as a serious effort in diplomacy. The Beaujeus had other hopes, looking to combat the intrigues of Landois and his princely confederates with weapons from the same forge. Though their own authority might be threatened by sedition and intrigue, they knew well that the position of Landois was to the full as precarious. The son of a tailor at Vitré, Pierre Landois had taken service in boyhood with one of the Court tailors, and on being brought into contact with the Duke when sent to try on his clothes, had ingratiated himself by his pleasing manners and alert intelligence. After performing some trifling secret services, he had been taken into the Duke's household, and there the rapidity of his advancement had testified to his growing favour. He was now Grand Treasurer and Receiver-General of the Duchy, and by virtue of those offices and of his hold upon the Duke he was all-powerful in the province. The failure of Francis II's faculties had been accelerated by a recent accident, and he was now 'feeble in body and still more feeble in mind, so much so that his speech was scarcely intelligible. . . . The Treasurer Landois kept him shut up in his room, allowing none to have access to him but those

[1] Doctor Thomas Langton, Bishop of St. David's. A safe-conduct had been granted to him on the 20th March: Valois, *Registre du Conseil*, p. 425.

about his person. Landois managed the affairs of Brittany in the name of the Duke'.[1] Intelligent, industrious, and astute, bold in his conception of a policy, fearless in its execution, and unswerving in his loyalty to his master, Landois was an admirable minister in many respects, but with much capacity he combined grave faults of character which in conjunction with his humble origin made him odious to all classes of Bretons. He was arrogant, avaricious, violent, suspicious, and vindictive. The ascendancy which he had established over the mind of the Duke he used as the basis of a despotic rule. Not content with acquiring for himself the wealth which the morality of the age would scarcely censure in the hands of power, he had also been the untiring and omnivorous architect of the fortunes of his plebeian race. Brittany groaned under his extortions and swarmed with his spies. Apprehensive of every influence which might menace his own, he was particularly jealous of the great nobility, whose ambition he dreaded and strove unceasingly to keep in check. His distrust was well founded: fiercely resentful that an upstart should monopolize an authority which they regarded as their birthright, the lords reciprocated his animosity with a hatred that grew in intensity as the passing days added to the power of the favourite and to their own impotent fury.

It was these malcontent nobles whom the Beaujeus, when threatened with Landois' hostility, had begun to encourage and finance. They were led by Jean de Chalon, Prince of Orange, Jean de Rieux, Marshal of Brittany, and the Vicomte de Rohan, whose cause the French ambassadors were instructed to plead. Rohan had been arrested by Landois for the murder of an equerry who had presumed to pay court to his sister, but had escaped from confinement, and sought an asylum in France. Fickle and vain, without brains or principles, a notorious spendthrift, a suspected traitor, an acknowledged murderer, Rohan was little fitted in himself to lead a party or to inspire a cause; but he bore an honoured Breton name, owned wide Breton estates, and was the near kinsman of many Breton lords;[2] and it

[1] Alain Bouchart, *Grandes Croniques de Bretaigne*, (ed. H. Le Meignen, Nantes, 1886), fo. 229.

[2] Jean de Rohan had married Marie, one of the two daughters of Francis I,

was intolerable to the haughty nobility of the province that he should suffer the defiling touch of the low-born exploiter of the Duke's dotage. On the very day on which the French Council were instructing their ambassadors to intercede for him, his friends in Brittany were exasperated by a fresh instance of the cold and calculated cruelty of the favourite. On the 5th April the Chancellor of Brittany, Chauvin, who had been imprisoned by Landois on charges of peculation and treason, and brutally misused in captivity, succumbed to his sufferings. When the news reached Nantes, the fury of the lords could brook no further restraint. That self-same evening (7 April) Orange and Rieux, who had long been planning to bring the Treasurer to justice, set out upon their mission of vengeance. Accompanied by a party of seigneurs, friends or relatives of the murdered Chauvin or the exiled Rohan, they entered the Duke's castle with arms hidden under their cloaks, supposing Landois to be in his master's company and resolved to apprehend him wherever he might be found. Reaching the castle a little before nightfall, they seized the gates, took possession of the keys, and instituted a search of the rooms. A few of the Duke's officers offered resistance, but were overpowered, disarmed, and placed under arrest. One of them, however, contrived to escape by jumping from the ramparts, and ran through the streets of the town, calling out that the Duke had been treacherously attacked, and that all faithful subjects should hasten to his assistance. The response was immediate, for Nantes loved its Duke and knew nothing of the real object of the conspirators ; and in a moment the whole town—officers, archers, and townsfolk, the crews of ships moored to the quays, and the pilgrims who had come in for the great Pardon of Holy Week—were flocking to the castle. Alarmed by this unexpected interference, the conspirators lost their heads, fired on the crowd in the hope of frightening them away, and produced a few casualties in their ranks, which served only to fan the flame of their indignation. Their own situation was then an ugly one, for their attempt had miscarried, and the fate which they had

Duke of Brittany, the other, Marguerite, having married Francis II. Jean de Rieux and Jean de Chalon were both sons of Duke Francis II's sisters. See Genealogical Table II.

designed for Landois seemed likely to be inflicted upon themselves at the hands of an infuriated mob. Pointing out to them the impossibility of resistance, one of the Duke's officers, Philippe de Montauban, persuaded them that their most prudent course was to seek safety in flight; and, escaping to the river, they fled to Ancenis, a stronghold belonging to Rieux near the Angevin border.

The plotters had failed to apprehend Landois for the simple reason, which they might easily have discovered beforehand, that he was not in the Duke's company on that evening. He had ridden out of Nantes in the afternoon, to taste the gentle pleasures of spring at his country house of La Pabotière, which stood on the banks of the Loire a few miles above the city. The lords had, indeed, taken the precaution of detaching a party to seek for him there, but this party through its improvident negligence had allowed the quarry to escape from under its very hands. About twenty mounted men had been sent to La Pabotière. On reaching the place they posted no scouts, and made no attempt to surround the house, but rode in a troop to the front door, and knocked loudly for admission. Seeing the courtyard full of horsemen, the footman, instead of opening to them, ran and told his master, who was at supper. Aware of his unpopularity, Landois realized his peril, fled from the back of the house while his enemies were still hammering for admission in front, and under cover of darkness and by the aid of a friendly peasant, made his way by unfrequented by-roads to the Duke of Alençon's estates at Pouancé. There he lay hid until he got news of the failure and flight of the lords, when he acquainted the Duke of Brittany with his whereabouts; and a few days later he returned in triumph to his master's side, more firmly ensconced than ever in the position from which his enemies had hoped to dislodge him.

As soon as he found himself in the saddle again, the first care of the Treasurer was to punish the insurgent lords. A Ducal ordinance of the 4th May declared them to be guilty of treason and rebellion, ordered the confiscation of their property, and commanded that no Breton should have any dealings with them on any pretext whatsoever. That the decree might not pass as an idle threat, more

active measures were put in hand; the houses of the rebels were destroyed, their forests were cut down, their revenues sequestered; and at the same time an army was got together for the siege of Ancenis. There the lords had been gathering their partisans and vassals around them, and had set about strengthening the fortifications of the town; but the activity of Landois seems to have alarmed them, and without waiting to be attacked they retired to Angers, and appealed to the French Government for succour.

Taking it for granted that the appeal would be heard and that the Beaujeus would sooner or later intervene in favour of the rebels, Landois began energetically to enlist support for himself. Turning first to the quarter where an opponent of the Beaujeus was most likely to meet with a cordial reception, he invited Orleans to come to the aid of the Duke of Brittany against his rebellious subjects. Humiliated by his recent discomfiture, egged on by Dunois, and tempted by the notion that he might divorce Jeanne and marry the Breton heiress, Louis decided to comply. On Easter Day he left Tours, accompanied by Dunois and Alençon, and was welcomed with enthusiasm at Nantes. At the same time a Breton embassy was dispatched to the Court of Richard III, negotiations were begun with Maximilian, and plans were laid for adding 2,000 Swiss mercenaries to the Breton army.

The revolted Breton lords must have seemed to the French Government to be tools placed in its hands by Providence for the furtherance of its designs on Brittany, but whatever Anne's ultimate intentions might be, she did not think that the hour had yet struck for precipitating a crisis. She therefore temporized with Orange and Rieux, and before Orleans and his confederates could mature their plans, she recalled them for the King's coronation by an invitation which they could scarcely venture to decline. The ceremony took place at Reims on the 30th May, and was followed by entertainments and fêtes. A few weeks later Charles made his solemn entry into his capital, and a further period of festivities ensued. Of all this gaiety the graceful and accomplished Duke of Orleans was the life and soul; he became at once the mainspring of Court amusements and their most conspicuous ornament; Charles

loved to hunt and to play with him; and there were observers who concluded that the young King would ere long succumb to the fascination which physical prowess and athletic skill are apt to exercise over the mind of impressionable youth. If the enemies of Madame are to be believed, Charles made no secret of his preference, but implored Orleans and Dunois to free him from his sister's control; and the Duke began to play with the notion that after all the Beaujeus might be eliminated more or less peaceably by virtue of the new influence which he was gaining with the King. There can be little doubt that he was privy to, if he had not directly instigated, a plot, discovered by Anne de Beaujeu in September, whereby Charles was to be carried off by three chamberlains in attendance on his person.

In any attempt which Orleans might make upon the authority of the Beaujeus he could count upon widespread support. The Duke of Alençon and the Count of Dunois had accompanied him in his recent expedition to Brittany. It was not long since the Count of Angoulême had shown his disposition by withdrawing his men from Normandy in violation of the express orders of the Government. From sullen but inactive jealousy of the Beaujeus the old Duke of Bourbon had passed to open association with Orleans. The Duke of Lorraine had signed a pact which professed to guarantee the Duke of Brittany against his rebel subjects, but of which the secret purpose was the overthrow of Madame. Balue, the Papal Legate, had quarrelled with the Government, and was now on a tour in the West; and no great injustice would be done to an intriguer as adroit and unscrupulous as ever schemed under a Cardinal's hat, were it to be assumed that he was ready to take a hand in the princely game. That the Breton Government would support the feudal reaction which it had been working feverishly to promote was a foregone conclusion; Richard III of England had promised assistance; and it was common knowledge that Maximilian's dearest wish was to tear up the Treaty of Arras and recover the lost possessions of the Burgundian House. To this mass of combustible material the conspiracy of the three chamberlains was designed to apply the igniting spark. Though they talked of saving

the King, the real aim was the ruin of the kingdom The triumph of Orleans and his feudal associates and foreign allies must inevitably have resulted in the virtual destruction of the power of the Crown and in actual dismemberment of the realm.

If Madame knew how to practise prudence and patience, she knew also the value of resolution and rapidity. At the first news of the plot she entered the Royal apartments, taxed the chamberlains with their treasonable practices, and dismissed them in the actual presence of the King, who could not muster up enough courage to forbid her proceedings. She then turned to Orleans and warned him of the consequences which his criminal folly was likely to bring upon himself. Paris being in the Duke's Government and a centre of Orleanist influence, she also determined to remove the Court from the capital, and to establish it temporarily at Montargis, an obscure little town in the diocese of Sens. By these proceedings she ventured for the first time to make a definite assertion of her authority.

At the same time she set to work to win over some of the Orleanist partisans. In the national interest it was impossible to acknowledge in their entirety the claims of the Duke of Lorraine, who not only demanded the restoration of Bar, but also asserted a title through his mother to the County of Provence. He was satisfied, however, by the surrender of Bar, which had been pledged to secure a mortgage debt that was still unredeemed; his claim to Provence was to be examined; and a hope was cunningly instilled in his mind that his more extravagant designs upon the Neapolitan throne might become an object of concern to the Government. Accordingly on the 29th September he concluded a formal treaty of alliance with the Beaujeus. A fortnight later (13 October) a similar pact was entered into by the Duke of Bourbon and his brother, the Cardinal; the Duke of Nemours; Madeleine of France, Princess of Navarre; the Sire d'Albret; and the Count of Comminges. Madeleine and d'Albret wanted the help of the Beaujeus in Navarre, where Jean de Foix, the brother-in-law both of the Duke of Orleans and of the Duke of Brittany, was attempting to dispossess the young Queen, Madeleine's daughter, who had married the son of d'Albret. The old

Duke of Bourbon had also veered round again to his sister-in-law's side; he disapproved of the levity with which Orleans and Landois had entangled themselves in traitorous alliances with foreign powers, and his reconciliation with the Beaujeus was assisted by Cardinal Balue, who had come to terms with the Government and been appointed French ambassador at the Court of Rome. Another adherent was gained in Louis de la Trémoille, who was married by Madame to her cousin, Gabrielle de Bourbon, and put in possession of the Thouars seigneury. Finally, steps were taken to counter the intrigues of the foreign allies of the Duke of Orleans. A welcome was extended to Henry Tudor, who was forced to abandon his refuge in Brittany by a well-founded apprehension lest Landois should agree to his betrayal for the purpose of securing Richard's support. In Flanders, where Maximilian was trying to impose his authority by violence, a treaty was signed (25 October) with the insurgent towns, promising them support against all attacks upon their rights and privileges. At Montargis, on the 22nd October, a definite bargain was struck with the lords who had rebelled against the Duke of Brittany.

The compact with the insurgent Bretons was the outcome of Madame's failure to conciliate the Breton Government, and Francis II and Landois had no one to thank for it but themselves. In August Anne had sent an embassy to Brittany furnished with the most pacific instructions, and authorized to propose that the unhappy differences between the Duke and his subjects should be referred to the arbitration of the Dukes of Orleans and Bourbon. A little later she had pushed her complaisance so far as to send Dunois himself to Brittany for the purpose of negotiating some amicable settlement. Meanwhile, however, the Breton lords lay under the decree of the 4th May, which ordained the confiscation of their property; and at the beginning of October they pointed out to the Council that the time within which they could legally appeal to the Parlement of Paris was fast running out. Permission to lodge the appeal, which had been refused hitherto, could no longer be withheld, unless the cause of the insurgents was to be abandoned irrevocably. Proceedings were therefore instituted, and an usher of the Parlement, Travers by

name, was sent to Brittany, to serve a citation upon the Duke. Directly he entered the Province, Travers was set upon by the Duke's archers, and was with difficulty rescued by the monks in whose church he sought sanctuary. An outrage so flagrant could scarcely be overlooked, and Anne de Beaujeu's answer to it was the negotiation of the treaty of Montargis.

The treaty amounted to a conditional surrender of Brittany to the King of France. Charles undertook that the ancient privileges of the province should be respected; he guaranteed that the administration of justice should not be tampered with; he promised to impose no taxes without the consent of the provincial States; the nobles were to be secured in the enjoyment of their prerogatives; the Duchy was to be guarded, and its strongholds commanded, by Breton lords and gentlemen; and the Duke's young daughters were to be suitably married with the approval of the States. By a separate instrument, dated the 28th October, the lords acknowledged the King's right of succession to the Duchy in default of issue male of the present Duke, and solemnly pledged themselves to employ all their resources in his behalf.

The claim to the Duchy [1] which was thus admitted by the subjects of Francis II was that which Louis had acquired from the heiress of the House of Penthièvre. Arthur II, Duke of Brittany, who died in 1312, was the father of three sons, namely, Jean III, who succeeded him on the Ducal throne, Gui, Count of Penthièvre, and Jean, Count of Montfort. Jean III died on the 30th April 1341, without leaving legitimate issue. He was survived by his younger brother, Jean, but the other, Gui, who would have succeeded to the Duchy, if then alive, had died in 1331, leaving a daughter, Jeanne, who had married Charles of Blois, the nephew of Philip, King of France. To whom, then, did the Duchy descend? Did it pass to the husband of Jeanne, who claimed to inherit as representing her father, or to the surviving brother, Jean de Montfort, who claimed as nearest heir of the dead Duke? The question was, not whether a woman could succeed to the Duchy, for that was not really disputed, but whether the right of representation

[1] For the Breton Succession question, see Genealogical Table II.

held good, when the succession to the Duchy was involved. On the one hand, the right was admitted by the custom of Brittany in respect of Breton fiefs. On the other hand, the Duchy itself was a fief of the Crown of France, and among the great French fiefs there was scarcely an instance where rights of representation were recognized. So difficult did the question seem to be, and so dubious was the public opinion of the province, that an assembly convened to adjudicate upon the controversy was obliged to separate without having reached a conclusion. Montfort, who was on the spot, seized the Ducal treasure, and established himself as Duke *de facto*; Blois-Penthièvre appealed successfully to the Parlement of Paris, and became Duke *de jure*; and for a quarter of a century Brittany was the theatre of a bloody civil war, in which the King of England supported one claimant, and the King of France abetted the other. The struggle ended at the battle of Auray in 1364, where the Montfort cause finally triumphed; nor had subsequent events done anything to improve the position of the rival House. In the year which followed the battle of Auray it had, indeed, been provided by a treaty signed at Guérande that the Duchy should revert to the House of Penthièvre in the event of the extinction of the male Montfort line. In the first place, however, though it was true that the death of Francis II would remove the last male representative of the Montforts, yet the Penthièvre inheritance had already passed into female hands, and there was no valid reason for subordinating the claims of the reigning Duke's daughters to those of a distant kinswoman. In the second place, the Penthièvre rights had been confiscated by the Breton States in 1420, and, after being renounced by Jean de Penthièvre in 1448, had been forfeited afresh in 1465. It was these rights, such as they were, that Louis XI had acquired from Nicole de Blois-Penthièvre. Little though they would bear investigation as a title to the Breton throne, they were far from being a valueless acquisition, since they could be employed to throw a cloak of legality over the nakedness of French aggression. So fiercely did the fire of local spirit burn in Breton hearts that there were two ways alone in which Charles VIII might hope to reach the Ducal throne otherwise than

through a sea of blood. He must either marry the Duke's daughter and succeed in right of his wife, or he must establish a claim of his own to compete with hers. With all their hatred of Landois the Marshal de Rieux and his colleagues would have been too good Bretons to betray their country, had it not been for the plausible pretext of the Penthièvre pretensions. Treason itself wears a less ugly look when clad in the robes of specious argument.

The treaty of Montargis amounted to a threat which Francis II could neither mistake nor ignore, and when Dunois reached Nantes on his mission of reconciliation, he found the Breton Government busily occupied in the mobilization of its forces. Its plan was to attack Ancenis, which was still the head-quarters of the rebel lords, though no longer their own place of residence. Dunois was to prove a strange ambassador. When instructed by the Council to inquire into the affair of the half-murdered usher, Travers, he told them that he himself had never heard of Travers, and had been quite unable to obtain any information about him. The Council replied in a tone of pardonable irritation : it was strange, they said, that their own ambassador should alone be ignorant of an incident which had shocked the whole kingdom ; Travers, they told him curtly, must be delivered ; and if Dunois had left Nantes without him, he must return forthwith and procure his release. The fact was that their envoy, so far from trying to promote the interests of the Government which he represented, was devoting all his energies to the completion of the feudal league, of which he may from henceforth be regarded as the chief architect and leading spirit. At the very moment when the French Council were consulting him about Travers, he was solemnly pledging himself (23 November) to the Dukes of Brittany and Orleans to aid them in extricating the King from the hands of those who had usurped his authority, and was urging them to renew their overtures to Maximilian and Richard III.

In inciting the Austrian Archduke against the Beaujeus the Breton Government was flogging the willing horse, and if Maximilian had not yet committed himself, it was rather because he was deterred by his domestic troubles in

insurgent Flanders and turbulent Germany than through any lack of inclination for an aggressive policy. It was credibly reported, the French Council told him in the course of a protest [1] elicited by some of his proceedings, that when once he had subdued Flanders, he intended to recover forcibly, with the aid of England, the ancient enemy of France, the territories which belonged to France under the terms of the Treaty of Arras. The report was amply justified by Maximilian's activities. In the instructions [2] lately given to his ambassadors in England he had impressed upon them the importance, not merely of preventing any *rapprochement* between Richard and the Beaujeus, but of contriving that the English should cooperate with the Bretons and himself in a joint invasion of France. They were bidden to represent to the King that he could never hope for so fair an opportunity as now presented itself for asserting the old English claims: the King of France was a child, his kingdom was ruled by a number of Princes agreeing but ill among themselves, and the feuds between the Houses of Orleans and Bourbon were notorious. If Richard should object that Maximilian himself had made peace with the King of France, and given him his daughter in marriage, it might be answered that it was not he who was the author of the peace, but his rebellious Flemish subjects, who had grown weary of war and delivered up his daughter to the French; the whole arrangement was distasteful to him; and 'because the Duchy of Burgundy and other countries and lordships belong to him and to his son, and are not given up, my said lord is entitled and minded to recover them, either by declaration of his said right, in case he may attain his object thereby, or in default thereof by other means'.

In the matter of Brittany the ambassadors were to profess the delight with which Maximilian had learnt that the ancient friendship between England and Brittany was to be preserved, and his eagerness to contribute in every possible way to its maintenance. Should any Breton envoys visit England while his own representatives were in the

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. P. Pélicier, vol. i, p. 52.

[2] *Letters and Papers illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII*, ed. J. Gairdner, vol. ii, pp. 39–49.

country, they were to be given cordial support, and in view of his great desire 'for good and fruitful love, union, alliance, and confederation' between England, Brittany, and himself, proposals for a formal compact were to be made, first to the Breton envoys, and then, with their concurrence, to Richard III. Some such terms as the following, thought Maximilian, might be mutually acceptable: the three contracting parties should promise to each other aid, assistance, and counsel against all enemies, and in case the territories of any of them should be invaded, the others should come to his succour with prescribed contingents of combatant troops; none of the three should enter into any separate treaty; when the English should make their descent in France, the Bretons should support them with all their power; and the Duke of Brittany should be rewarded with some of the spoils of France, when the King of England should have 'attained his object'.

Such then, avowed by themselves and patent to all the world, were the designs of those whose aid the French Princes had not scrupled to invoke for the promotion of their selfish schemes. Even when one knows the issue, it is impossible to study the diplomatic correspondence of Maximilian, to mark the expectant greed of this foreign power or the sullen jealousy of that, and at the same time to remember the excesses of French factions and the reckless perfidy of the French Princes without looking for the utter destruction of France and the final overthrow of the courageous girl upon whose shoulders reposed the heavy burden of national defence. But Anne's stout heart did not readily quail, and as the year drew to a close, she achieved another success in the very province which Maximilian was scheming to wrest from her. For some time Burgundy had been a source of anxiety to the French Government, and it was now becoming a centre of danger. Though its people were not as a whole disloyal, its States and its Parlement had been alienated by fears for their local liberties, and the partisans and agents of Maximilian were striving to turn this current of disaffection to account. Their leader was Jean de Digoin, Seigneur de Villarnoul, Maximilian's chamberlain, who had fled from the pro-

vince at the time of the French occupation. He had now returned, and, lavish of promises and bribes, preached his gospel of sedition: the liberties of the province were in peril; the States-General of Tours had been a sham; and French taxes and French tyranny would soon be the order of the day in Burgundy. Opinion in the province was troubled by his predictions, and it seemed for a time as though the movement upon which Maximilian was counting might reach serious dimensions. Anne took the necessary precautions. A treaty with the Swiss provided for the enlistment of an army of those invincible warriors; Scottish troops were stationed on the Burgundian border; dispositions were made to counter any offensive movement that might be attempted from Germany; and the chief Burgundian towns were placed in safe hands. Measures were also taken to conciliate opinion within the Duchy, the salaries of the captains of strong places being greatly increased, and revocations of demesne grants being annulled, for in war, as Madame told the Chambre des Comptes, there are things that must be winked at.[1] In the last days of the year her officers at Dijon were able to report that they had broken up the conspiracy by the arrest of its leaders. By Madame's orders Villarnoul, together with his son and his chief associates, was brought to trial at the bar of the Parlement, the protests of Maximilian being disregarded. The prisoners, said Anne, were charged with high treason; they were subjects of the King of France and had been taken within his dominions; and the Archduke's own honour required that the charges against them should be submitted to impartial investigation. If innocent, the accused would be discharged; but 'should it turn out otherwise, then justice will be done as the case requires'.[2] The matter did 'turn out otherwise', as every one knew that it must, and in due course the prisoners, convicted of an attempt to dismember the kingdom in a moment of national peril, were condemned to the shameful death which the law reserved for treason. But the sentence was never carried out, because Maximilian, seizing the person

[1] C. Rossignol, 'Histoire de Bourgogne sous Charles VIII,' in the *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de Dijon*, second series, vol. v, p. 96.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

of the French ambassador who was then at his Court, swore to avenge upon him any violence offered to Villarnoul or his colleagues.

Despite some regrets for the abortive Burgundian plot, the party of the Princes entered upon the New Year in high spirits. Promises of adhesion had been coming in to them from many quarters, and Dunois seems to have persuaded himself that 'those in Normandy, Poitou, Anjou, and several parts of the kingdom' would stand by the Duke of Orleans, that the Royalist troops would come over to him at the word of command, and that the Duke had only to show himself to become the idol of the country. To hasten this consummation, Orleans himself went to Paris, where his governorship gave him a position of authority which he hoped to turn to account; and he was presently joined there by Dunois, who came armed with draft manifestoes and remonstrances which he and Landois had been elaborating in Brittany. Their idea was to play a sort of constitutional confidence trick upon a credulous *bourgeoisie*. Orleans was to be portrayed as an ardent champion of popular rights, pushing his democratic fervour to the point of endangering his liberty and even his life, whilst Anne de Beaujeu was to be painted as the embodiment of cold and callous despotism, maintaining her power by illegal methods, trampling on the nation's rights and liberties, spending recklessly with one hand what she grasped violently with the other, and by no means averse from assassination when it suited her purpose. Such at least were the general character and manifest purpose of the protest which Orleans addressed to the Parlement on the 17th January by the mouth of his Chancellor, Denis Le Mercier.

Le Mercier began by reminding his audience of the position which the Duke occupied in the State, and of the services which he had already rendered to it. Louis was the second person in the kingdom, the nearest male relative of the sovereign, his lieutenant-general, and the governor and captain of Paris, the Ile-de-France, and Champagne. In exercise of the duty which this position laid upon him, he deemed it necessary to seek the advice of the Parlement in a condition of public affairs which gave rise to grave

disquietude. Soon after the recent demise of the Crown, and by reason of the disorders which then prevailed, the Dukes of Orleans, Bourbon, and Brittany, with other Princes and nobles, had called upon the King to summon the States-General of the realm, and, when they met, had upheld them against the machinations of those who aspired to monopolize the Government. Under princely favour and protection the labours of the States had issued in valuable decisions. But those decisions were being ignored. The States had resolved that the King should rule through his Council; but the King was not a free agent, and the Dame de Beaujeu, having usurped the authority which the States had committed to the Council, was claiming to maintain it under colour of a fictitious legal custom. It was her boast that she would keep the King in leading-strings and have the guardianship and government until he should be twenty-one years of age; and the better to support her authority, she had retained in her own hands the whole control of finance. Her administration was both improvident and arbitrary. Though the States had made a specific and not ungenerous grant to the King, and though it was illegal to impose any greater taxation than the States had sanctioned, yet Madame by the reckless profusion of her grants to her creatures had already incurred a deficit of some 400,000 *livres*, and her policy would result in a state of affairs as unconstitutional and as vexatious as the worst excesses of the late reign. It was useless to look to peaceful means for a remedy: Anne had made the King's guards swear fealty to herself, she had summarily ejected his faithful servants, and there were reasons for believing that she had formed designs upon the lives of her opponents. Impotent to check these abuses, Orleans had come to Paris to enlist the aid of the Parlement in delivering the King from the evil influences to which he was exposed and in putting a term to disorder by constitutional means. He was actuated by no selfish motives and looked for no personal reward. If Madame would retire from the Court, he would formally undertake on his own part to remain in rustic seclusion. His one object was to promote good government and the welfare of the kingdom.[1]

[1] *Histoire de Charles VIII*, ed. Godefroy, pp. 466–7.

There was just enough substance in this pleading to make it dangerous. It was true that the Beaujeus were wielding an authority which the representatives of the nation had committed to a princely Council. It was true, too, that they had permitted expenditure to overflow the limits of the narrow channel within which the States had sought to confine it. But with what respect was a protest to be treated when Orleans and his associates were the authors of it? Was it for those to criticize the constitution of the Government who had forfeited their places at the Council-board by irregularity of attendance, incapacity for business, and deliberate abstention? With what countenance could the feudal reactionary pose as the champion of popular freedom? Had the behaviour of the Princes at Tours been such as to inspire a belief in the sincerity of their professed desire for constitutional progress? With what grace could another meeting of the States-General be demanded by the Duke of Brittany, who had sent no deputies to the last? With what force, or even with what decency, could Madame's financial administration be impugned by men such as Orleans and Dunois, who at the very moment of their protest were drawing huge sums from the public purse? Questions such as these could not but suggest themselves to an impartial auditor of Le Mercier's tirade, and the magistrates of the Parlement were intelligent men, not likely to be deceived by the speciousness of Orleans' arguments into any mistaken trust in the purity of his motives or the sincerity of his professions. Accordingly, the reply of the Parlement, when made by the mouth of its First President, La Vacquerie, dashed all the hopes which the Princes had placed in the gentlemen of the long robe. Whilst correct and courteous in tone, La Vacquerie was uncompromising in substance. He told Orleans that public peace, the most inestimable of all benefits, could not be maintained without concord among the Princes, and that the Duke ought to ponder well before sowing dissension in the Royal House. In any event it was not for the Parlement to intervene in these high matters. The Court had been instituted by the sovereign to administer justice to his lieges; its members had no concern with political questions; and it could not take

part in public affairs unless upon the express invitation of the King and his Council.

A few days later the protest which Orleans and his friends had thus unsuccessfully lodged with the Parlement was repeated by them before the University, but it produced as little excitement in the lecture-rooms of the Sorbonne as it had caused in the corridors of the Palais-Royal. A violent manifesto to the 'good towns' met with no better fortune, and the whole carefully contrived agitation had fallen so flat that, when Anne at last deigned to pay heed to it, her pronouncement seemed to be almost superfluous. The official reply declared that the King found the proceedings of his cousin to be very strange, and the facts alleged by him to be false. The Duke had apparently been seduced into searching for pretexts for troubling the kingdom, and his conduct was the more inexcusable in that he had been treated with the utmost consideration from the beginning of the reign and given the highest place in the councils of the State. His allegation that Anne de Beaujeu's claim to the position she occupied rested upon local custom was both false and ridiculous. 'If we desire,' said the King,[1] 'to have continually at our side our very dear and much loved sister, the Dame de Beaujeu, and if we repose entire trust in her, there is no occasion for surprise, seeing that we have no nearer relative or dearer friend, and that it was to our well-beloved brother and cousin, the Sieur de Beaujeu, in preference to all others, that our late father expressly entrusted the care and custody of our person.' Should any misfortune befall the King, his sister would be the chief sufferer, and it was absurd to suggest that she was sacrificing his interests, abusing his confidence, interfering with his freedom, or tampering with the loyalty of his guards. If any of his subjects were in doubt, let them come to Court and see for themselves. With regard to the States-General, the King would consider whether another meeting was likely to be beneficial to the country, and, if so advised, he would summon them to assemble. The Duke of Orleans professed a deep respect for the throne, and it was to be hoped that his conduct would tally with his professions. If not, such action would

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. P. Pélicier, vol. i, p. 60.

be taken as the case might require. In the meantime let the good towns distrust the Duke's representations, refuse him all support, arrest his emissaries, and behave themselves with the vigilance and circumspection which the situation demanded.[1]

The issue of this Royal circular was followed by the precipitate flight of Orleans from Paris. The minatory tone which Anne de Beaujeu had adopted was not calculated to reassure him, and it might well be that, her patience at length exhausted, she had really determined to bring the Duke's pernicious activities to an abrupt end. He at least was so informed. He was told that Madame was moving upon Paris, that her officers were already in the city, and that his arrest was a matter of hours, or perhaps of minutes. At the time when the news reached him he was playing tennis at Les Halles. He rushed from the court, leapt on a mule, and, accompanied by Dunois, Le Mercier, and one or two other of his supporters, rode hurriedly to Saint-Cloud. There he halted for a few moments to put on travelling dress and to exchange his mule for a speedier mount, but that done, he immediately hastened on again, and by dint of riding hard all night, reached Mantes at dawn. Some thirty or more miles of road separate Mantes from Paris, and the intention of the fugitives was to halt there and snatch a brief repose, but hard on their heels came a troop of their men, to warn them that their flight was discovered. Jumping again into the saddle, therefore, they pressed on once more, and this time did not pause till they were safe within the sheltering walls of the Duke of Alençon's town of Verneuil. Thence Orleans sent frantic messages to his confederates, exhorting them to march with all speed to his succour.

In the meanwhile, on the 5th February, Madame had reached Paris, where she was well received, and where she proceeded to a judicious distribution of rewards and punishments. A grant of exemption from the irksome obligations of the ban and reban marked her appreciation of the fidelity of the Parlement and the Chambre des Comptes. The governorship of the Ile-de-France and Champagne was

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. P. Pélicier, vol. i, pp. 56–66; Gachard, *Extraits des Registres des Consaux de Tournay*, pp. 49–50; &c.

transferred from the Duke of Orleans [1] to the Comte de Dammartin, a trusted servant of Louis XI, and that of Dauphiné was taken from Dunois and given to Beaujeu's brother-in-law, the Comte de Bresse. After securing the capital, Anne moved rapidly on Normandy, and there distributed her forces so as to sever the communications of Orleans with the Duke of Brittany and other members of the feudal league. The rapidity of her movements upset the plans of the confederates, who singly were no match for the Royalist forces, and the Dukes of Orleans and Alençon, cut off from the prospect of assistance, were obliged to obey the command which summoned them to Evreux, and there to make their submission to the Government (23 March).

The capitulation of the Dukes postponed the likelihood of domestic disturbance, but it did not end the troubles in Brittany. There Landois had been making ready to go to the aid of Orleans and at the same time to finish off his own quarrel with the rebel lords. Picked troops had been placed in Dinan, Clisson, and other fortresses; a body of cavalry had been got together under Philippe de Montauban; and the *francs archers* had been organized to take the field at the end of February. The immediate object was the capture of Ancenis, and in March this was accomplished. To punish the Marshal de Rieux, to whom the town was a source of profit as well as of strength, the warehouses and their contents were burnt, the mercantile privileges of the town were transferred to its more obedient neighbours, and its port and markets were closed to Breton sailors and merchants. But Landois' success was of short duration. The rebels were preparing to retaliate, and the omens were auspicious. Whilst Rieux and his friends had behind them the whole power of France, the allies of the Grand Treasurer were failing him one after another: the surrender of Orleans had dashed the hopes of the French Princes; the insurgent Flemish, supported by French troops under d'Esquerdes, were providing ample occupation for Maximilian in the Low Countries; and the prospect of substantial help from England seemed to be growing

[1] In view of his continued contumacy Denis Le Mercier's house in Paris was ordered to be demolished in April 1487: *Lettres de Charles VIII*, vol. i, pp. 175–6.

daily more faint. Moreover, the domestic situation of Landois was insecure; Brittany was full of gentlemen who sympathized with Rieux and his adherents in their opposition to the favourite; and the inconstant Rohan, who had been bribed into deserting them, was now won back to their side by a promise of the hands of the Duke's two daughters for his own two sons.

Events soon justified the sanguine expectations of the rebel lords. In June the insurgent forces entered Brittany, and on the 24th of the month they found themselves face to face with the army which Landois had put into the field. Instead of fighting each other, the two armies joined hands and marched on Nantes, to demand the surrender of the detested favourite. This time the true object of the lords was understood, and no Breton wished to see his country torn by an internecine strife merely for the purpose of keeping Landois in power. The very mob which had frustrated their schemes a year ago now greeted the lords with enthusiasm, and Francis II's brother-in-law, the Vicomte de Narbonne, who tried to bring the Nantais back to their allegiance, was obliged ruefully to confess that he would rather rule a million wild boars than attempt to control the Duke's subjects. In the very moment when he was thus counselling submission, the Duke's apartments were entered by the Chancellor and several gentlemen. '"My lord Duke," said the Chancellor, "I am constrained to arrest your Grand Treasurer, Pierre Landois, and to make him my prisoner. If you desire to calm your people, I beg you to permit that he be brought to justice." Landois was hidden in the room, and heard these hard words. "How, my lord Chancellor," said the Duke; "why do my people desire his arrest? What evil has he done?" "My lord, he is accused of divers heinous crimes and offences; unjustly, it may chance; but if he be taken, the uproar among the people will be stilled, and to him will justice be meted out." "Do you promise me, then," said the Duke, "that he shall have justice and naught but justice?" "Yes, my lord," said the Chancellor, "and thereto I pledge you my word." Thereupon the Duke took the Treasurer by the hand, and delivered him to the Chancellor, saying: "I entrust him to you, and command you on your life that

you have justice done to him, and suffer no other harm to befall him. You owe your Chancellorship to him, and on that account you should be his friend.' " My lord," said the Chancellor, " thus shall it be." '[1]

Though the Duke in his simplicity might cherish illusions about the treatment to be accorded to his favourite, the unhappy prisoner knew well what sort of justice he might expect from the tribunal before which he was to be arraigned. Yet, for all that, he conducted his defence with pertinacity. He pleaded that the welfare of the Duke and his Duchy had always been the paramount consideration with him, and that the preservation of Breton independence had been the guiding motive of his policy. Offered a choice between the party of Anne de Beaujeu, who stood for centralization and monarchical authority, and the party of the Princes, who were striving to preserve the power and prerogatives of feudalism, he had chosen as the interests of a feudal principality demanded ; all that he had done had been ' in favour of the Duke of Orleans, and to eject Madame de Beaujeu from the Court, and to oust her from the government of the King and kingdom '. The plea was true, but it was not calculated to commend itself to those whom Madame had befriended in misfortune and assisted to prosperity. Nor, in the eyes of his self-appointed judges, had Landois' conduct of political affairs been his only or most serious offence. His meteoric rise from the counting-house to the chair of state ; the aggrandizement of his plebeian family ; the ascendancy which he had long exercised over the feeble mind of the Duke ; the arrogance and presumption born of his good fortune ; the insolence with which he had trampled on the feelings of an ancient nobility, ignored their privileges, and spurned their protests ; the tyrannous oppression which had culminated in the murder of Chauvin—these were the true crimes of the Grand Treasurer, and they could not be justified on any pretext of provincial patriotism. Landois' one chance of safety lay in the affection of the master whom he had served so long. It was certain that the Duke had the wish to save him, but it was by no means sure that his feeble mind could summon the resolution to enforce his will. The lords

[1] Alain Bouchart, *Grandes Croniques de Bretaigne* (ed. H. Le Meignen), fo. 232.

decided (19 July) to run no risks. Like the Parlement of Paris when it hanged Olivier le Daim 'without notice thereof being given to the King', the judges and gaolers of Landois determined that the Duke should have no opportunity of rescuing the prisoner by an exercise of his prerogative of mercy which it would be an act of treason in them to override. To prevent any news of their intentions from reaching him, the castle was to be occupied until the plot had been carried out, and Lescun, Count of Comminges, with whom the Duke was on terms of intimate friendship, was entrusted with the perfidious task of diverting him from inconvenient activity. Directly Lescun entered the Ducal apartments, Francis asked him almost fiercely if there was any news of the Treasurer's trial. '"Yes, my lord," said the Count; "his judges say that the case against him is full of weighty matters, and they talk of coming to you on completion of the evidence, to consult with you before delivering judgement." "Such is my desire," said the Duke; "for whatever offences he may have committed, I grant him his pardon, and will not sanction his death." This said, the Count changed the subject, to distract his mind from that train of thought.'[1] Meanwhile, outside the castle, a scene was being enacted which formed a strange commentary upon Lescun's conversation; and as the setting sun fell upon the public gibbet at Biesse, it lit up the lifeless body of Pierre Landois swinging idly in the summer breeze.

A complete reversal of Landois' policy was the immediate consequence of his fall. The faction which had triumphed by the help of Anne de Beaujeu could hardly perpetuate a policy of hostility to France or ally themselves with the princely colleagues of the minister whom they had overthrown. To justify the course which they had pursued, they must effect a reconciliation between Francis II and Charles VIII, and restore peace to their distracted country. There would be no difficulty in coming to terms with Madame, and an arrangement was soon embodied in the Treaty of Bourges,[2] which provided for perpetual peace,

[1] D'Argentré, *Histoire de Bretaigne* (Paris, 1588), fo. 732.

[2] The treaty, signed by the Duke of Brittany on the 9th of August, was ratified by Charles VIII, on the 2nd November 1485.

alliance, confederation, and union between France and Brittany. Each Government pledged itself to aid the other against all its enemies, whether foreign or domestic, and whatever the pretext of their hostility; and every existing engagement running counter to the terms of the present contract was to be regarded as null and void. In so far as it released the Breton lords from the undertaking into which they had entered at Montargis, the new treaty gave away some of the advantages which the French had wrung from the quarrels of the Breton factions; but the loss was more than made good by the explicit stipulations which the Bretons now accepted, for the independence of Brittany would be deprived of half its danger, if upon every occasion of foreign invasion or domestic revolt in France its Duke were obliged to render to the King the aid and comfort which in times past he had been wont to give to the King's enemies.

Since the Duke of Brittany had been the mainstay of the feudal coalition, the compact to which he had now set his hand could not but influence profoundly the domestic situation of Anne's Government. The encouragement which it afforded was not inopportune. The submission which events had imposed upon the Duke of Orleans at Evreux had been insincere, and its fruits were of short duration. For weeks past Orleans and his friends, Dunois, d'Alençon, and d'Angoulême, had been labouring to resuscitate feudal opposition to the Beaujeus; the Duke of Bourbon, the Vicomte de Narbonne, the Sire d'Albret, and some smaller nobles had been prevailed upon to join them; they still hoped for the support which Richard III had promised to the Bretons; and Maximilian had undertaken that an invasion of Picardy should be his own contribution to the common cause. The belief of the confederates was that with the forces at its disposal the Government could have but a slender chance of suppressing disorder in the centre and south, if required simultaneously to hold the Breton border and to defend Picardy from invasion. The Princes, however, could never achieve the rapidity of movement which was one of the sources of Madame's strength, and they were still engaged in vague preparation when events in Brittany demolished their

plans. The defection of Brittany was a heavy blow, and it did not stand alone. Fortune, as though ashamed to favour the sluggard, seemed altogether to have deserted their cause. Scarcely was the ink dry on the parchment which recorded the submission of Francis II when Richard of England perished on the field of Bosworth (22 August), leaving his crown to be gathered by the man whom Anne de Beaujeu had harboured, befriended, and assisted to his goal. At the same moment, too, the town of Orleans, the capital of the Duke's appanage and a vital link in the chain of his communications, was won over by du Bouchage to the Beaujeus' side. For Louis of Orleans himself, isolated in Beaugency, short of supplies, and without hope of succour, there was then no alternative but a second submission. Royal forces were to occupy his towns; his allies, Bourbon, d'Albret, and d'Angoulême, were to disarm; and his evil genius, the arch-conspirator, Dunois, was to be banished to distant Asti.

Thus in humiliation and defeat ended the second feudal coalition. At Tours the Princes had pursued their selfish ends under cover of a constitutional movement, and had been vanquished by the tact and political dexterity of Madame. They had then adopted more violent methods, and again, as the result mainly of her own personal qualities, of her adroitness in diplomacy, her rapidity in action, her prudent judgement and unflinching courage, Madame had brought their designs to naught, and had conjured away, at least for the moment, the grim spectres of foreign invasion and civil war.

V

THE BRETON WAR[1]

After the fall of Landois the government of Brittany had passed into the hands of those who had effected his overthrow, and Rieux, Orange, and Lescun now ruled the province in the name of the Duke. To all appearances the event was a triumph for the policy of Anne de Beaujeu. Unlike Landois, who had never disguised his enmity, Rieux and his party professed to be her friends; some of them, such as Orange and Lescun, were her paid agents; and all of them owed to her support the successful issue of the enterprise which had placed them where they were. It was therefore to be expected that the change in the direction of Breton affairs should lead to a new spirit of cordiality in the attitude of Brittany to France. But that this novel harmony would long continue to drown all discordant notes seemed to be an over-sanguine expectation. The treaty of Bourges had neither removed the causes of friction which had come down from the past, nor settled the urgent and vital question of the succession which dominated and darkened the future; and there were observers who believed that the traditional Breton policy must inevitably impose itself upon any party which should assume the responsibilities of power. Such was evidently the opinion of a French councillor who about this time addressed to Madame a reasoned exposition of the French claims in Brittany and of the manner in which they could best be enforced.[2] He made no attempt to minimize the difficulties of the enterprise. The idea of French annexation was so unpopular in the Duchy that he doubted whether the King would be able to achieve success, even were he to retain the support of the lords, and he feared that as a matter of fact the lords could not be depended upon. In this cautious estimate of the situation he was perfectly correct. Not much reliance

[1] A sketch map of Brittany will be found at the end of the volume.

[2] *Revue Historique*, vol. xxv. The author would seem to be either Gié, who was a Breton, or Adam Fumée, who had more than once visited Brittany as an ambassador, and knew the country well.

was to be placed upon the haughty and violent Rieux, the shifty and hypocritical Orange, or the supple and dexterous Lescun; and the general hatred for Landois had secured for the pro-French party a success which was not in the least likely to be repeated when the question at issue should be the independence of the province.

It was not long before the French Government got an indication of the temper which any attempt at annexation was likely to arouse in Brittany. In October 1485, within a few weeks of the Treaty of Bourges, Nicole de Blois-Penthièvre formally renewed on the death of her husband, Jean de Brosse, the cession of the Penthièvre rights which the couple had jointly made in favour of Louis XI some five years before. The event could only be interpreted as evidence of an abiding intention on the part of the French Government forcibly to assert the Penthièvre title after the death of Francis II, and, being so construed, it instantly revived the apprehensions which the Treaty of Montargis had inspired in patriotic Breton breasts. The reply of Francis was twofold. From the Breton Estates he obtained an emphatic assertion of his daughter's title (9 February 1486). From Maximilian he sought a renewal of the old alliance which had bound them together against the French.

The moment was opportune for an enemy of France to seek the Archduke's aid. On the 16th February 1486 Maximilian secured his election as King of the Romans, and a triumph won in the teeth of French opposition disposed him to pursue once again his still unsatisfied revenge upon the heirs of Louis XI. Within a few weeks of his election he made up his mind to begin hostilities, and suddenly violating the Treaty of Arras by an invasion of the district which the treaty had assigned to France, he captured Thérouanne, Lens, and other cities. Thanks to the foresight of Anne de Beaujeu, who had raised troops at home, enlisted foreign mercenaries, strengthened garrisons, and collected supplies, her generals, d'Esquerdes and Gié, were able to check the progress of the invaders; and before much harm had been done, Maximilian was compelled to abandon the campaign by the mutinous conduct of his unpaid soldiery. The expedition had been a failure, not only in its immediate object, but also in its ulterior purpose, which

was the encouragement of Madame's domestic enemies. Not a Prince had stirred, and the violent manifestoes by which the King of the Romans had endeavoured to excuse a perfidious infraction of his treaty obligations had served merely to rally public opinion in support of his enemies. His protests were addressed to the King, the Parlement, the University, and the municipal authorities of the capital. He complained that the Beaujeus had violated the Treaty of Arras, conspired against his person, allied themselves with his rebellious subjects, invaded his territories, ignored the wishes of the French States-General, trodden under foot the rights of the French nobility, and oppressed the French people. The clamour fell upon deaf ears. So far as the indictment related to the foreign policy which the Beaujeus had pursued, the citizens of Paris were unmoved by the outcry of their country's most deadly foe; and so far as it related to her internal affairs, they resented the dictation of a foreign ruler who owned not one inch of land in the kingdom.

About the same time Madame succeeded in winning the Duke of Bourbon back to her side. For months past the crotchety old man had been living in sullen seclusion on his estates, furious that the command of the army in Picardy should have been entrusted to d'Esquerdes, rather than to himself as Constable, and openly blaming the Beaujeus for the outbreak of war with Maximilian and the discontent of the nobles. There can be little doubt that in invading Artois Maximilian had looked for another feudal rebellion, or that that rebellion would have occurred, if Bourbon had given a lead. Though he had shrunk from going to that length, his attitude had been far from satisfactory. He had ignored a pressing invitation to come to Court and in this time of danger to support the King with his advice and his men. When in the beginning of September he did at length join the King, he kept up his injured air, reiterated his grievances and complaints, and seemed in the eyes of the world to quit the Court in the sullen mood in which he had come to it. Really, however, he had been won over by the tactful management of his sister-in law, and when they met again at Compiègne at the end of the month, the differences between himself and the Beaujeus were again

composed. As a result, the Seigneur de Culant and Philippe de Commynes, who had sedulously promoted his discontent, were dismissed from his *entourage*.

The Duke of Brittany and his French adherents were thus disappointed in the hopes which they had been reposing in the activity of the King of the Romans and the example of the Duke of Bourbon, but the alarm produced among them by the failure of Maximilian's campaign and the defection of the Constable operated none the less effectually to resuscitate the old feudal alliance. In the last months of the year the turbid stream of intrigue began to flow again as strongly as ever. The Duke of Orleans was in constant communication with Maximilian and with Francis II. The Duke of Lorraine, disappointed in his hope of recovering Provence, was again in opposition to the Court. Always to the fore when mischief was brewing, Dunois left Asti suddenly for Poitou, and there in flagrant violation of the express orders of the Government established himself in Parthenay, which he set to work to fortify, provision, and man. On the 15th December the Dukes of Orleans and Lorraine, the Count of Angoulême, Dunois, and d'Albret notified Francis II of their adhesion to a new feudal league. A week later they were joined by Orange, by Rieux, and by d'Albret's sister, the Countess of Laval, who by her rank, wealth, beauty, and intelligence filled a great place in Brittany. The professed objects of the league were the removal of the Beaujeus, the establishment of constitutional rule, and the protection of the Breton inheritance from the cupidity of Charles VIII's advisers. In point of fact, however, the confederates were far removed from any agreement about their aims, for beneath the common fear of Anne de Beaujeu which formed the bond of sympathy between them there was seething a welter of personal jealousies and conflicting interests. Orleans, Maximilian, Orange, and d'Albret were all suitors for the hand of the Breton heiress, and not even the fear lest her inheritance should be snatched from her by the common enemy of them all could avail to soften the animosities arising from their rival pretensions to her hand. The hopes of Orleans were of long standing, and it was clear that he had no intention of abandoning them, if, as the Beaujeus were informed by one of their secret agents,

he was even now negotiating in Rome for the dissolution of his marriage with Jeanne de France. It was therefore little to his taste that the King of the Romans should come forward as a competitor, and still less so that he should receive from Francis a formal promise of the hands of the two young Duchesses for himself and his son. Yet it was on those terms that Maximilian was invited to join the feudal league (March 1487). Whilst Maximilian was thus the candidate selected by the Breton Duke, the suit of Orleans was favoured by Dunois and the French Princes, and the claims of d'Albret were supported by Rieux, by the Countess of Laval, and by a powerful party among the gentry of the province, who wanted no foreign Prince for their future ruler. Orange, should he be unable to win the prize for himself,, would adjudge it to d'Albret; and Dunois was not blinded by his partiality for Orleans to the merits of a proposal which might enlist the resources of Gascony and of Navarre in the common cause. That the proposal had its advantages as a political expedient could not be questioned; but as a matrimonial project it might seem to be open to criticism. Whilst Anne, the heiress of Brittany, was still a mere child, d'Albret was a widower of forty-five; his appearance was repulsive, his manners were uncouth, and his temper was violent; and he was already the father of eight legitimate children and of a not inconsiderable number of bastards. Such were the pair whom it was proposed to join together in the sacred bonds of wedlock.

Confronted by the new feudal coalition, the Dame de Beaujeu determined to adopt the tactics which had answered so well in the past, and to strike rapidly at individual members of the confederacy before their friends could rally to their aid. Beginning with Louis of Orleans, who was in the capital of his appanage surrounded by evil counsellors, planning treason and rebellion, but as yet fearing to strike, she sent Marshal de Gié to Orleans to interview the Duke and either by persuasion or by force to bring him to Amboise. The summons, with which he dared not comply, put an end to Louis' irresolution. Assuring the Marshal that he would obey the Royal command, and prevailing upon him to accept the assurance, he left Orleans upon the pretext of a hunting expedition, rode in haste to Blois, thence made his way to

Fontevrault, and so on the 13th January reached Clisson in Brittany, where he was welcomed by the Prince of Orange and by gentlemen of the Duke's household. Nobody could mistake the significance of so deliberate an act of disobedience. 'Ten or twelve days ago', wrote the King on the morrow, 'we were informed that our brother of Orleans desired to go secretly to Brittany, a thing which seemed strange to us, and we sent to him our trusty and well-beloved cousin, the Sire de Gié, Marshal of France, to acquaint him with our pleasure thereon, which was that he should not go. By whom he made answer that he had no intention of going there, but was minded to comply with our wishes and commands in that and in all other matters. . . . Nevertheless, on the morrow . . . he departed from Blois with a mounted party eighty or a hundred strong, and, riding at full speed day and night, went off to Brittany without our knowledge or approval and in breach of the assurances which he had given to us.'[1] To make matters worse, the arrest of a messenger soon afterwards placed the Government in possession of correspondence which convicted a party at the Court of traitorous communication with the fugitive Duke. The leaders of this party were seized, the Bishops of Montauban and of Périgueux being confined in a fortress, and Commynes being placed for greater security in one of Louis XI's iron cages at Loches.

Without giving time to their confederates to effect a diversion, Madame then pounced upon the nobles who were making ready to raise the south against her Government. She began with Lescun, Count of Comminges, the most formidable by his power, the most dangerous by his ability, and the least pardonable in the base ingratitude of his falseness. His rank, his position, and his power Lescun owed to the favour of the Crown. He had entered the Royal service as a humble soldier of fortune; Louis XI had laden him with favours; and Anne had not only confirmed him in his offices and possessions, but had even entrusted to him the task of safeguarding French interests in Brittany. In Guyenne, where he wielded an almost regal authority, he was now represented by his brother, Odet d'Aydie, the Seneschal of Carcassonne, and it was against

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. P. Pélicier, vol. i, pp. 143–4.

him that Madame determined to move. Leaving Tours with the King on the 9th February, and marching rapidly southwards, she advanced upon Saintes, where Odet d'Aydie had established himself in the expectation of holding out until the Count of Angoulême, d'Albret, or some other of his friends should come to his assistance. But the people of Saintes had little love for the Seneschal; some of his men refused to fight against the King; and on the approach of the Royal army he retreated precipitately to Blaye. There, in spite of the strength of the town, which was well fortified, garrisoned, and supplied, he was quickly reduced to submission. Lescun's strongholds were then occupied, and his honours forfeited, the County of Comminges being confiscated to the Crown and that of Fronsac given to Gié, whilst the Governorship of Guyenne was conferred upon Beaujeu, and its Admiralty merged in the Admiralty of France, which at the beginning of the year had been bestowed upon Graville. That trusty and able lieutenant well deserved the confidence of his mistress. 'Along with du Bouchage, La Trémoille, d'Esquerdes, and Duplessis Bourré, Louis Mallet, Seigneur de Graville, belonged to the picked band of able and loyal men who took the lead in the armies and the councils of the young monarch.' [1]

The rapidity and completeness of Madame's success demolished at a blow those castles in the air which Dunois had been optimistically building in the fancied security of Parthenay. His project had been to strike a decisive blow against the Beaujeus whilst the Royal forces were at grips with Lescun's power in Guyenne; and he wrote to one of his associates on the morrow of the King's departure for Guyenne: [2] 'Madame, who seemed like to be delayed before Parthenay, has gone on and taken the King into Guyenne with a view to depriving Monseigneur de Comminges of his government and his strongholds, and also, if she can, to destroying Monseigneur d'Angoulesme and d'Albret. You must know that in her great eagerness to undo us she has collected as large a force as she possibly could, and has also taken with her the King in person, who is the chief source of her strength. She is proclaiming

[1] P. Pélicier, *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu*, p. 128.
[2] Godefroy, *Histoire de Charles VIII*, pp. 507–8.

broadcast over the kingdom that she has an understanding with you, and that Lorraine is on her side. . . . Wherefore, Monsieur, in proportion as you desire the success of our enterprise and cherish your relatives, friends, allies, and servants in these parts, is it incumbent upon you to take the field. It is the general opinion here that you should make for Guise and Soissons and pass the Oise above Compiègne, whilst Lorraine advances through Champagne and joins hands with you in the neighbourhood of Brie, to march on Paris, which is also the objective of Monsieur d'Orléans.' Though he did not tell his correspondent so, Dunois felt confident that Maximilian would be tempted by these disturbances to essay another invasion, and he looked also to Brittany to renew hostilities. Such had been the scheme of operations, dangerous enough if executed according to plan, which had been disconcerted by the rapidity of Madame's movements in Guyenne. In view of the collapse of Lescun's lieutenant and of the inactivity of Orleans, whom the bitterest reproaches of Dunois failed to set in motion, it was now for the plotters to look to their own safety. As soon as the Royal army moved out of Bordeaux the Count of Angoulême came in and made his submission, and his marriage with Beaujeu's niece, Louise of Savoy, withdrew him finally from the rebel ranks. Dunois himself fled across the Breton border, leaving Parthenay to be surrendered by his lieutenant and dismantled by the King's officers. A few weeks later d'Albret, moving when the moment for effectual intervention had passed, was held up by Beaujeu's officers at Nontron and obliged to sue for mercy and forgiveness.

The young King, who had accompanied his army in these operations, had enjoyed his introduction to campaigning. It was, indeed, natural that the boy's ardent spirit should rejoice in the pomp and circumstance of a warfare still half feudal in its display, and his pride had been tickled by the easy triumphs of a victorious military promenade. 'The moment the King appeared in the district the whole [conspiracy] dissolved in smoke, nor was there a place which held out so much as a single day.'[1] The young Charles might well be elated when even the sober Graville was

[1] Saint-Gelais, *Histoire de Louis XII*, p. 57.

infected with enthusiasm. 'The King's affairs', wrote the Admiral on the 30th May,[1] 'are going excellently on all sides, thanks be to God. The Bretons are pressed so closely that they know not where to go. Monsieur d'Albret is besieged in Nontron. Not a single man is under arms in the service of the Duke of Austria or otherwise from the border of Picardy to Flanders. In a word, nothing could be better than the way in which my lord's affairs have progressed up to the present.' 'The situation of our affairs is such', wrote the King himself on the same day,[2] 'that notwithstanding the damnable conspiracies and enterprises of those who labour and have laboured in divers manners to trouble and invade our realm, we hope by the grace of God, and with His help and that of our loyal kinsmen and subjects, right speedily to assure its safety.' The satisfaction with which Charles contemplated his successes strengthened the influence of the sister who had organized victory, and we read without surprise that 'in the said expedition to Guyenne Madame de Beaujeu, his sister, was all the time with the King, . . . nor was anything done touching the King and kingdom but with her knowledge, approval, and consent'.[3]

The year was to be one of prosperity for the Regent, and that nothing succeeds like success was pre-eminently true of the sort of conflict in which Anne was now involved. To unmask the plots of Orleans was to pave the way for the subjugation of Guyenne; to defeat Lescun was to prepare the flight of Dunois and the submission of d'Albret; and to restore the Royal authority in France was to lay the foundations of victory in the conflict with Maximilian and his Breton ally. So little were the unaided attacks of the King of the Romans feared after the campaign in Guyenne that Madame was able to march her victorious army straight to the border of Brittany, where another opportunity was impending for the prosecution of her designs on the Duchy. Yet a further change had overtaken Breton politics since the advent to power of Rieux and his friends, for the Court of Francis was now full of the malcontent subjects of Charles VIII, and Orange, Orleans, Dunois, and Lescun had

[1] Pélicier, *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu*, p. 135, note 2.
[2] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, vol. i, pp. 187–8.
[3] Jaligny, *Histoire de Charles VIII*, ed. Godefroy, p. 23.

become all-powerful in the Duke's councils. Jealous by temperament, and instinctively detesting strangers, the Breton nobles resented this foreign influence, and those of them who, like Rieux, had been instrumental in overthrowing Landois feared lest the Duke should make use of his French counsellors to avenge the favourite whom he had never ceased to lament. Here, then, was another opportunity to create a French party in Brittany, and Anne de Beaujeu was too much her father's daughter to neglect an occasion for dividing her enemies against themselves.

In March the discontented Bretons met at Châteaubriant to consider their position. They were led by the Vicomte de Rohan, who wanted the hand of the young Duchess for his son, by the Count of Laval, and by Marshal de Rieux; and they were supported by the Duke's own bastard, the Sire d'Avaugour, who had quarrelled with his father for being denied permission to accept the collar of the Order of St. Michael which Charles VIII had opportunely bestowed upon him.[1] In addressing the assembled gentlemen Rieux dwelt upon the inconveniences and even dangers which must ensue from the advent of the French *émigrés*, whose presence at the Ducal Court might bring down upon their country the whole power of France, and he suggested that they should again invoke the aid of the Beaujeus. The plan he proposed would have the twofold advantage that they would please an old friend whilst recovering for themselves their proper preponderance in the councils of the province. Envoys from the Regent were present, and would explain her attitude. They would assure them that war with Brittany was the last wish of the French Government, which desired merely to prevent the Duke from giving aid to French rebels; the peace which the Bretons wanted could best be secured by the expulsion of Orleans and his partisans; and if the lords would take that task upon themselves, they might call upon the King for what help they required.

[1] An Assembly of Notables at Tours in 1470 declared that Charles the Bold, by harassing the Norman harbours, by wearing the English Order of the Garter, and by other hostile acts, had broken the treaty of Péronne. 'To wear an Order', comments Dean Kitchin (*History of France*, vol. ii, p. 72), 'was to acknowledge the giver as your superior, and to place yourself under his command.'

Despite the dexterity of this argument—and it was nicely calculated to appeal to the prejudices of the assembly—there were some among Rieux's auditors who felt scruples about the deliberate adoption of a policy which amounted to high treason to their country. 'It was the opinion of some of them that, if they lent an ear to this proposal, there would or might ensue the total destruction of the country and of their sovereign lord, the Duke, for thereby might the King overrun with his arms the Duchy of Brittany, and a calamity so grievous would brand their names for generations with an indelible stigma of disgrace.'[1] Others, however, made light of these misgivings, and the tender consciences of the doubters were at length salved by an expedient which seemed to reconcile duty with interest. The Regent was to enter into a formal treaty defining the conditions of her intervention. The treaty fixed the size of the French contingent at 400 'lances' and 4,000 foot, and those numbers were not to be exceeded except upon the demand of the confederate lords; so long as Francis II should live, Charles would advance no claim to the Duchy; he would not make war upon the Duke in person or upon any place in which he might be, or besiege any town or castle without the permission of Rieux and his colleagues; his troops would commit no violence upon the inhabitants, and take no provisions without adequate payment; and as soon as the French Princes should quit Brittany, the King would withdraw his troops. Upon those terms the lords were to take up arms and co-operate with the Royal forces in purging the province of French refugees.

The limitations which this compact sought to impose upon the action of the King must have been framed by the Breton lords rather with the object of saving their own faces than in the expectation that the French would observe them. Unsupported as they were by efficient sanctions, those limitations were likely to be but feeble checks upon an ambitious Government; and it was an open secret that the French Court was looking forward with confidence to the conquest of Brittany. The fact was that Rieux and his friends were trying to steer a middle course where no compromise was possible. Since there was no choice for

[1] Al. Bouchart, *Grandes Croniques de Bretaigne*, fo. 234.

Brittany but between independence on the one hand and absorption on the other, so was there no alternative for its people except a whole-hearted opposition to Madame's projects or an unconditional surrender to the King. There were Bretons who sincerely loved their country and who believed that it was better for the province to be united to the kingdom to which it belonged, than to remain the desolate arena of contending factions, until eventually absorbed by some greedy foreign power. But that was not the attitude of the rebel lords, and the Treaty of Châteaubriant was framed upon no such principle. By that instrument the lords betrayed the Duke without recognizing the justice of the King's claims, and admitted Charles to their country without acknowledging a justification for the intrusion or providing any effective guarantees for limiting its scope. The reason was that, though the rank and file might include some puzzled patriots in honest uncertainty about the path of duty, the leaders were mere traitors, concerned not so much with searching for ethical principles upon which to regulate their conduct as with garnering the material harvest of opportune villany. Their correspondence shed a sinister light on their motives. They asked Charles for men, money, and wine, above all for wine, for wine was scarce in Brittany, and no Breton could be happy without it. If this was the supreme expression of Rohan patriotism, as a modern writer has contemptuously called it,[1] then, indeed, the Breton who loved his country might well regard the future with misgiving. His own sorrowful prevision re-echoed the current prophecy: 'On dira, Bretagne si fut cy'.

When the Royal army crossed the border in May, it consisted, not of 6,000 men, as arranged at Châteaubriant, but of a full 15,000. It marched in three divisions under the Count of Montpensier, Albon de Saint-André, and the youthful Louis de la Trémoille, whose exceptional abilities Madame had been quick to detect. Whilst the Court established itself at Laval, to keep an eye on the Count, who despite his adherence to the pact of Châteaubriant was oscillating between his dislike of the Duke's foreign advisers and his affection for the Duke himself, La Trémoille

[1] De Maulde-la-Clavière, *Histoire de Louis XII*, Part I, vol. ii, pp. 180–3.

crossed the Vilaine to join hands with the lords, who had captured Guéméné, and the other divisions advanced upon the town of Ploërmel. The reduction of this place would sever Brittany in two and isolate the Duke from the greater part of his province. Realizing the importance of saving Ploërmel, the advisers of Francis bestirred themselves to meet the danger, the Duke of Orleans in particular exerting himself to infuse some vigour into the organization of defence. In response to Francis' appeals a considerable body of men came in to the rendezvous at Malestroit; they numbered some 3,000 cavalry and not less than 16,000 foot; but most of them consisted of raw parochial levies, and all of them felt a measure of the annoyance with which every true Breton regarded the authority delegated by Francis to his French advisers. Towards the end of May they received orders to advance to the relief of Ploërmel. With little stomach for a fight against an army composed in part of their compatriots, they listened eagerly to the insinuations of disloyal officers who asked them why they should encounter the dangers of battle for the purpose of perpetuating an unwelcome foreign influence, and a few hours later the whole force had melted away as though by magic. The epidemic of desertion settled the fate of Ploërmel, which succumbed (1 June) after a brief resistance, the Duke himself retreating hurriedly to Vannes, with the French in hot pursuit. With no better support than the fragments of a demoralized army it was as impossible to hold Vannes as it had been to save Ploërmel, and Francis and his French companions, Orleans, Dunois, and Lescun, were fain to push on again in vessels sent by Orange to their aid. Such was the hurry of their departure that most of their baggage was left behind and fell into the hands of the French when they occupied the town on the 5th June. Of the troops who had entered Vannes with the Duke some accompanied him in his flight by sea, some made off overland for Dinan, and the rest surrendered to the enemy, taking service under the rebel lords.

From Vannes the Duke and his companions retired to Nantes, and the leaders of the invading army had then to determine their policy with regard to that city. Doubting their capacity to reduce so formidable a place, and actuated,

it may be, by some lingering compunction for the misfortunes which they had helped to bring upon their Prince, the Breton lords disliked the proposal for a siege which was advanced by their French colleagues. If any attention was to be paid to the pact of Châteaubriant, their opposition should have been decisive, for by the terms of that document the French lay under a twofold obligation to give way, in that they had undertaken to attack no place in which the Duke might be present, and to institute no siege of which their Breton allies might disapprove. With victory within their grasp, however, the French Government were in no temper to be deterred by the misgivings, or to defer to the scruples, of their associates. They knew that Nantes and Rennes were the two chief bulwarks of Breton independence, and that the reduction of one or both of these places was an essential preliminary to the conquest of the province. To mask those places and advance into the country was at the best to waste time in useless military demonstrations; as long as the Duke's standard floated over their ramparts, his armies could shelter and re-form in its shadow; and they might, perhaps, issue in new-born strength to cut the communications of the invader who should leave them unconquered in his rear. But the task which awaited the besiegers of Nantes was a very different matter from the capture of Guéméné, Ploërmel, and the other strongholds which had lately succumbed to them. Powerful and numerous as it was, and deadly in its execution upon the lesser fortresses, the French artillery was not equal to breaching the walls of a great fortified city; and even if its guns could have battered its fortifications into ruins, the French force was numerically inadequate to the assault of a place garrisoned, not only by some thousands of the Duke's soldiers, but also by a resolute townsfolk little their inferiors in military prowess. That the town could be reduced by blockade seemed to be a no less extravagant expectation. The whole mercantile marine of Nantes itself and of Saint-Nazaire, Saint-Pol-de-Léon, and Morlaix had been pressed into the service of revictualling it, and when the French opened fire on the 19th June, they had before them a city as copiously provisioned as it was strongly fortified and abundantly manned. Moreover, the blockading forces were inadequate to the complete invest-

ment of the city, and throughout a not inconsiderable part of its circumference Nantes lay open to the entrance of reinforcements and supplies.

But if the dice seemed thus to be loaded against the army which lay encamped before the Breton capital, elsewhere the star of France appeared to be everywhere in the ascendant. In the north of the province her allies, the Vicomte de Rohan and his brother, the Sire de Quintin, had taken the field, and, calling upon the people to join them in expelling the strangers about the Duke who had brought the evils of war upon the country, they had set to work to ravage the estates of those who refused to side with them, and after occupying Lannion and Tréguier, which placed themselves under their protection, they were now menacing Guingamp. This place had ventured to resist in the hope of receiving succour from the Duke's lieutenant at Rennes, but that officer was engaged in an operation which was to leave him little opportunity for the relief of Guingamp. On being joined at Rennes by the cavalry which had escaped overland from Vannes, he determined to combine that force with his own and to march to the aid of Francis at Nantes. When within five leagues of his goal, he was suddenly attacked by a division under Adrien de l'Hôpital and utterly defeated with the loss of nearly his whole force, some five or six hundred men alone contriving by their knowledge of the country to get through to the Duke. At this moment, too, came the news that d'Albret had surrendered to the King in Nontron, a misfortune for the Bretons the gravity of which could be gauged by the magnitude of the effort which the Duke's advisers had made to enlist his support. Nor, with all these mishaps to depress them, was the foreign intelligence such as to raise their spirits. In response to their vehement appeals for succour Henry VII promised assistance, but made no effort to redeem his pledges. Maximilian did what he could, dispatching a Flemish force of 1,500 men by sea to Saint-Malo ; but his own situation was little more encouraging than that of his Breton friend. The military genius of d'Esquerdes had more than redressed the successes surreptitiously snatched by Maximilian in the previous summer, and Anne de Beaujeu's enemies were now noting with disgust how her lieutenant was ' lording it like

a little king in Picardy'. He had followed up successful incursions into Hainault, Flanders, and Brabant by the seizure of Saint-Omer (27 May), and was planning the recapture of Thérouanne (26 July). To counterbalance these reverses, Maximilian's generals, the Count of Nassau and the Duke of Guelders, had embarked upon a project which was destined to bring upon themselves another disaster. Their intention was to carry Béthune by a *coup de main* in collusion with a section of its inhabitants. Unfortunately for them, the plot was revealed to the governor of the place, who kept d'Esquerdes informed of their projects. Accordingly, when Nassau marched upon Béthune at the head of a column 3,000 strong, the French commanders were awaiting him with a body of picked troops ambushed in the neighbourhood of a swamp. The subsequent surprise was complete and overwhelming. Attacked with impetuosity by the French, and deserted by its German cavalry, Maximilian's infantry broke in confusion, suffering enormous loss; both its generals were among the prisoners, one of them being dangerously wounded; and at the end of the day one of the best armies of the King of the Romans had ceased to exist. Such were the tidings which the summer months, as they passed, brought in to the Breton Court.

Meanwhile the siege of Nantes had been going on with varying fortunes but without bringing the French materially nearer to the accomplishment of their purpose. The Duke of Orleans had been the life and soul of the defence. Throwing off in the bracing air of battle the levity and lethargy which characterized his political conduct, he had lived laborious days upon the ramparts, inspecting the guards, cheering on the defenders, and facing danger with a light-hearted courage to which the Bretons who liked him least could not refuse a reluctant admiration. At length help arrived from an unexpected quarter. Northern Brittany had heard how a foreign army was besieging its Duke in Nantes, and how the shot of hostile guns had profaned the very apartments in which he and his young daughters were dwelling. The news stirred to their depths the hearts of a simple people that beat true in tenderness and loyalty, and Léon and Cornouaille rose as one man to succour and

defend their Prince. Gentlemen, *francs-archers*, parochial militia, and peasants came pouring together into Guingamp, and fancy pictured them as a mighty host which dried up the streams in its passage when it stopped to quench its thirst.[1] Dunois, who was on his way to England to get help from Henry, but had been detained by stress of weather at Saint-Malo, placed himself at the head of some ten thousand of the most warlike of the Guingamp host, and picking up the fifteen hundred men who had come from Flanders under Baudouin of Burgundy, entered Nantes in triumph without opposition from the besieging force. To persevere in the siege was now as dangerous as it was futile, and on the 6th August the French broke up their camp and marched away.

The failure before Nantes was a blow to Madame's prestige, and that she recognized it as such was evident from the disingenuous explanation of it which she hastened to circulate in Paris. 'We have already informed you', so Charles was made to write,[2] 'how our people had taken up their position before Nantes because no enemy was to be found in the open country. Afterwards the Bastard Baudouin and a number of Flemings landed at Saint-Malo, and moved thence to Rennes, to join hands with a great assembly of the common people of Brittany, who had risen and set out for Rennes with the intention of attacking our troops. On learning this, our officers marched with our army straight against the said Flemings and Bretons for the purpose of getting into touch with them and offering battle. When the said enemy heard of their departure, they turned back and retired upon Rennes in excessive great haste and fear.

'On their going from Nantes our people conducted themselves so well and so much to our honour that we lost not a thing of our artillery or equipment, for all that the garrison sallied forth against our troops with intent to do them damage. But by skill and good conduct they were so rudely repulsed that they were constrained to draw off with the loss of many killed and wounded. Our said army is at present in the field, always advancing to get in touch with

[1] 'Si que il n'y demoura goute de eaue'; Al. Bouchart, *Grandes Croniques de Bretaigne*, fo. 236.

[2] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, vol. i, pp. 212–3.

the said Flemings and Bretons. And with God's help we hope to be so well served that our affairs in that quarter will be settled in accordance with our desires and to the confusion of all rebels against our authority. Of the which matters we desire you to be informed as being among those of our subjects whom we think most happy to have good news of ourself and of the success of our enterprises.'

Nothing of much importance was attempted on either side in the few weeks of campaigning weather which remained after the relief of Nantes. In spite of their failure there and of an annoying misfortune in the loss of Redon, which was treacherously surrendered to the Bretons by an officer of Rieux's who commanded it, the French retired to winter-quarters with solid advantages to their credit. The army which had failed at Nantes was powerful enough to effect the reduction of lesser places, whilst the surrender of Vitré was exacted from the Count of Laval as a security for the maintenance of his somewhat wavering allegiance. When the season drew to a close, it left the French in possession of Clisson, Ancenis, Châteaubriant, La Guerche, Vitré, Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier, Dol, Ploërmel, Vannes, and Auray, whilst the towns of Lannion and Tréguier and the castles of Josselin, Rohan, and La Chèze were in the hands of their confederate, the Vicomte de Rohan. Hemmed in by a ring of its own strong places occupied by hostile troops, its lands ravaged by their garrisons, its coasts harassed by the incursions of predatory Norman sailors, its treasury empty, its allies supine, its council distraught by the rivalries of contending factions, Brittany seemed to be awaiting the advent of another year of warfare with nothing to anticipate but defeat, and nothing to hope for but a speedy end.

Yet, as the summer of misfortune turned darkly into a winter of misery and despair, some gleams of sunshine began to break fitfully through the lowering clouds. Curiously enough, it was from the French Court, of all places, that the first rays shone. In the month of December Charles was visited by a Breton embassy under Lescun, who came to see whether any tolerable terms could be obtained from the French Government. With the ball at their feet, and in no mood for negotiation, the King's advisers found Lescun's proposals impertinent and unreason-

able ; and so far as its diplomatic activities were concerned, the embassy had to record the failure to which from the first it had been foredoomed. But incidentally, and surreptitiously, it achieved a result more important than anything it could reasonably have expected to win by negotiation. For some time past Marshal de Rieux had felt a growing dissatisfaction with the progress of events. He had begun to realize that a course undertaken to gratify his own ambition and his jealousy of Orleans and Dunois was likely to enure to the exclusive benefit of the King of France ; and perhaps, too, his conscience had begun to reproach him with the consequences which his treachery had entailed upon a country of which he was an affectionate, if also a wayward and misguided, son. In this temper he had come to look askance at all Madame's projects, and the siege of Nantes, undertaken against his advice and persisted in despite his protests, had come near to causing an open rupture. He now addressed to Charles another remonstrance against the policy of his Government. The French Princes, he said, were ready to quit Brittany, if permitted to retire peaceably to their homes, and he therefore begged the King to withdraw his troops without further molesting the Duke or his Duchy. He argued that this was the undertaking which Charles had made in the Treaty of Châteaubriant, and threatened that, should the King fail to observe the engagements into which he had then entered, he for his own part would regard his promises as dissolved, and would deem himself free to terminate his friendship with the King. To this communication Madame replied haughtily that the King of France had no ' friends ', and that his Government was now too far committed in Brittany to think of drawing back. His previous displeasure intensified by the rebuff, Rieux fell an easy victim to the cajoleries of Lescun, who played upon his wounded vanity, his injured interest, and what passed with him for outraged patriotism, and persuaded him that the hour had come when he must accede to the request of his sovereign, the Duke, the solicitations of his sister, the Countess of Laval, and the eager entreaties of his Breton friends.

His decision once made, Rieux acted with an energy characteristic of himself and with an insensibility to the

finer shades of feeling not uncharacteristic of an age that rarely allowed itself to be hampered by a Quixotic regard for honour. His first step was to transfer his own town of Ancenis to Ducal custody. Then, picking up a large force of cavalry sent from Nantes to act under his orders, he rode to Châteaubriant, where the rebel Breton lords were assembled. Not a hint of his defection had as yet got abroad; the lords supposed him to come as the accredited representative of their protector, Charles VIII; and he was admitted without suspicion. Having thus gained an entrance for himself and his Breton troopers, he showed his hand to the astonished gentlemen when they could no longer question his proceedings. The French King, he said, refused to abide by the terms of the treaty which bore his signature; it was time that they should all 'be Bretons'; and he had come to hold the place for the Duke: whoever did not agree with him was at liberty to depart. His hearers might have objected that to 'be Bretons' now was to admit treason to their country in the course which they had hitherto pursued, and then to double that infidelity with a desertion of the sovereign whose assistance they had invoked. But reason could offer no effective answer to the stern argument of Rieux's troopers, and all that the French partisans could do was to ride away and carry to their friends the unwelcome news of his defection.

The restoration of the Marshal's allegiance and of that of the confederate lords who followed his lead revived the hopes, and with them the energies, of the Ducal Court. The recovery of Ancenis and Châteaubriant was welcomed as an earnest of what an altered fortune might have in store, and the Duke of Orleans began to press for active measures against the remaining French garrisons before spring should enable the Royal army to return and protect them. Resolution and rapidity came natural to Louis in the field, and the energy of the man of action was reinforced by the impatience of the suitor. Of his rivals for the hand of the young Duchess, one, Maximilian, had already intervened in the defence of Brittany, and the other, d'Albret, was known to be raising troops in his own fiefs and to be importuning Spain for aid. If Brittany was to be saved, Orleans desired that the credit of its salvation should be due to himself, and

to secure that result he advocated immediate action. His plan was to attack the places held by the French on the west side of the Vilaine; they were garrisoned in but moderate strength, and no French armies were as yet in being to come to their relief. By the end of February the Breton forces under Rieux were ready to take the field, and after reducing Moncontour marched upon Vannes. Weakly held, short of provisions, seriously damaged by gun-fire and mines, and without hope of succour, Vannes held out for a week and then on the 3rd March surrendered, twenty French officers being left as hostages in the hands of the conquerors. Auray and Ploërmel quickly shared the same fate, and by the end of March the Vicomte de Rohan, isolated in the north, was obliged to agree to terms which involved the surrender of his fortresses, whilst preserving the liberty of himself and his men.

In the meanwhile Madame had been collecting an army at Pouancé with which to resume her interrupted offensive when the seasons should bring a return of campaigning weather. Her aim was to assemble a force of 10,000 French troops, and to add to that a contingent of 5,000 Swiss as soon as these could be enlisted. Details of organization were left in the hands of Graville, and the extant official correspondence between the Court and its generals bears abundant testimony to the foresight, care, and zeal with which the faithful war minister addressed himself to an irksome task. The supreme command in the field was entrusted to Louis de la Trémoille, who had led a division in the last campaign. La Trémoille possessed many military qualities which are common in no period, and were noticeably unusual in his own. Though not yet twenty-eight years old, he was methodical, painstaking, hard-working, and cautious almost to a fault. Never did any commander stand so little in need of the advice which Graville gave him that mature deliberation is the surest prelude to successful action. He left nothing to chance, and expected of fortune nothing to his advantage. His aim was to anticipate and provide against every vicissitude, to cover every risk, and, so far as lay in human foresight to accomplish it, to eliminate mischance. Before embarking upon a plan, he scrutinized it in every detail, discussed it in every aspect, calculated its possible

variations, tabulated the claims which it might involve and the resources with which he could meet them, and prepared for every contingency. To the artist's quest of perfection he joined the method and precision of the man of business; his accounts were kept with scrupulous accuracy, his papers were arranged and docketed, and copies were made of every important document. Not a trace was discernible in him of the habitual feudal indifference to the rank and file of the army and to questions of material and supplies. In his view, a commander would fall far short of his duty if he were to neglect the maintenance of his effectives, the condition of his artillery, and the adequacy of his commissariat. He made it his business to learn the requirements of every trooper in his ranks; he knew to an ounce the appropriate ration in food-stuffs, liquors, and comforts; he studied the prices at which the requisite commodities could be bought; and he saw to their supply.

The leader who thus studied every detail of their safety and comfort was idolized by his men, and they judged him more truly than the courtiers who jeered at his solicitude and sneered at his precautions. Beneath the general they saw the man, and the man was generous, true, loyal, and brave. In an age when the gentleman had outlived the ideals of mediaeval chivalry without having acquired the modern virtue of patriotism he so framed his conduct as to be touched by no suspicion of self-seeking or intrigue. Constant in his loyalty to King and country, he never hesitated in the path of duty, and from the moment when he assumed the burden of the Breton campaign, through the perils of Naples and Fornovo, through the vicissitudes of Louis XII's Italian warfare, through the ordeal of Marignano, where his son fell at his side, down to the supreme hour at Pavia, where he laid down his own life in his sovereign's defence, his career shed an ever-gathering lustre upon an illustrious name. He found his reward in the confidence of successive sovereigns, the devotion of his troops, and the deep affection of his friends. Among the solemn official papers which he preserved are a few private letters that bear witness to the feelings he inspired. However much the Beaujeus and Graville might fret at his delays, they never wavered in their confidence; and when the capture of Saint-Malo had

crowned a triumphant campaign, Graville voluntarily surrendered to the captor the great booty in the port which by the law and custom of the country was the perquisite of himself as Admiral. 'Monsieur le Prince,' wrote[1] the King's tutor, Étienne de Vesc, 'I have two things to complain of. The first is that you have forgotten about the book you promised to send me, and the other is that, now that you are the King's Lieutenant-General on the marches of Brittany, you have become so big a swell that you have not bothered to send news of yourself to your former companions.[2] However, if there is anything that I can do for you here, let me know, and I will do it with the best will in the world.' The same note of half-playful affection is struck in the letters which the King himself addressed to his general; and it is impossible for a student of his correspondence to doubt the personal attractiveness of the man who could inspire in princes and statesmen the feelings which find expression in its pages. He had, indeed,

> 'Made use and fair advantage of his days;
> His years but young, but his experience old;
> His head unmellowed, but his judgement ripe;
> And, in a word,—for far behind his worth
> Come all the praises that I now bestow,—
> He is complete in feature and in mind
> With all good grace to grace a gentleman.'

In such words might the praises of La Trémoille have been sung, had France borne a Shakespeare to give them expression. Lacking that happy fortune, she framed her eulogy with the delicate grace that so well becomes her genius, and in glorious association with the heroic Bayard Louis de la Trémoille lived in her affection as an incarnation and exemplar of the *Chevalier sans Peur et sans Reproche*.

Appointed lieutenant-general of the army in Brittany by letters-patent dated the 11th March, La Trémoille actually took up his command on the 18th of the month. He had under him a splendid body of officers, his lieutenants including such experienced soldiers as Marshal de Baudricourt,

[1] *Correspondance de Charles VIII*, ed. La Trémoille, p. 17.

[2] 'Et aussi que estez devenu si grant seigneur depuis que estez lieutenant general du Roy ès marches de par delà qu'il ne vous est point souvenu d'escripre de voz nouvelles à messieurs vos compaignons.'

the Seneschals of Agen and Toulouse, the Sieur de Saint-André, and Adrien de l'Hôpital. His first duty was to resist the orders of his own Government, which, in the alarm and fury with which it viewed the successes of the Bretons, insisted that Rohan should be relieved at Josselin before it should be too late, and he too should be lost to the French cause. If things were to go wrong in Lower Brittany, they told him, it would provoke unfavourable criticism, for the general opinion was that Rohan might easily be relieved; whilst it was certain that, unless something were done quickly, the Viscount would be lost to the King, and the whole French position imperilled. Even now Rohan was in communication with the Duke, and if any delay in succouring him were to forfeit his allegiance, it would deal a damaging blow to French prestige and French prospects. Josselin was only a few days' march from the French base; the Breton army was a mass of raw levies, ill equipped and worse disciplined; and it would melt away at the first hint of aggression. La Trémoille took a more cautious and less hopeful view of the situation. With his effectives as yet incomplete, his artillery unprepared, and his organization unfinished, he had no intention of adventuring his forces in the heart of a hostile country for no better military object than the preservation of the worthless Rohan. And, indeed, the problem which confronted him wore a different complexion from that with which the French had been called upon to deal in the preceding year, when they had marched about the province at their pleasure. Then they had behind them a line of fortresses, beside them the forces of the Breton lords, and before them a distracted and almost helpless country. Now the fortresses were lost or threatened, the lords had abandoned their cause, and Brittany, united, active, and encouraged by prospects of foreign support, was an antagonist of quite another calibre. Neither by the impatience of the Beaujeus, nor by the exhortations of Graville, nor by the derision of irresponsible courtiers was La Trémoille going to be coerced into a premature advance, with hostile garrisons left behind him to sever his lines of communication and cut off his supplies. In his judgement, the piecemeal reduction of enemy strongholds was an essential preliminary to the conquest of Brittany.

His plan was to construct a solid base of operations by occupying a series of strong positions along the Breton border, and he hoped to complete the line already partially held at La Guerche, Vitré, and Dol by the capture of Ancenis and Châteaubriant to the south and of Fougères to the north. Making his first move on the 30th March a few days after Rohan's surrender, he took the little place of Marcillé near La Guerche, where a small Breton garrison had been harassing his foragers and might have sufficed to interfere with the carriage of supplies to Châteaubriant. Its fortifications were demolished in compliance with the orders of the Court, which regretted the destruction of a town belonging to the Count of Laval, but considered that such small places were costly to garrison, used up effectives that could be employed to greater advantage elsewhere, and even then were not secure Now that the fate of Rohan was settled, the Court was again growing cautious, and in congratulating the general on the good beginning he had made 'in avenging our people at Vannes', it began to counsel prudence where it had hitherto exhorted to action; the Swiss reinforcements, it wrote, were still on the road, the weather was atrocious and would hamper the movement of artillery, and it would be folly to run into danger in a bad and difficult country Some concern was also felt at the news that was coming in about the Breton preparations for defence: though Dunois and Lescun were still at Nantes, their colleagues had dispersed to collect troops; Odet d'Aydie had gone to take charge of Châteaubriant on the sworn promise of the lords that he should be relieved within five days of being besieged; and La Trémoille must reckon with the certainty that he would have d'Albret on his shoulders with the first favourable wind.

The true state of affairs was not such as to inspire overmuch anxiety. Though the Breton Government had originally designated Châteaubriant as the place of rendezvous for its forces, it had been obliged by their slowness in responding to the summons and by the proximity of the French to adopt Montfort-sur-Meu as a rallying-point, and the garrison of Châteaubriant consisted of no more than 1,200 men, with the scantiest prospect of support from outside. La Trémoille appeared before the place on the

15th April. Though the garrison conducted itself with a gallantry which befitted some of the best soldiers in the Breton pay, it was no match for the French numbers or for La Trémoille's splendid artillery; its sorties were rudely repulsed, its fortifications crumbled under a destructive fire, and on the 21st April Odet d'Aydie was obliged to capitulate. He was to deliver the place with its military equipment, to guarantee the immediate liberation of the French officers taken at Vannes, and to give hostages for the due performance of his bargain. Graville feared that La Trémoille might feel some disappointment at the acceptance of terms less severe than those to which the Vannes garrison had submitted, but he comforted him with the assurance that it was a good capture, since there was never a place so weak but what a strong garrison could make its capture a matter of difficulty.

After razing the fortifications of Châteaubriant La Trémoille set to work to entrench his army in a fortified camp, and his cautious deliberation again began to exasperate his masters and to incur the ridicule of the Court. Graville thought the matter serious enough to warrant the addition of an autograph postscript to his official dispatch. 'I beg you', he wrote,[1] 'to allude no more to your camp, for your detractors make it the occasion of very bitter comment. They maintain that this entrenchment of yourself thirty miles off is the very antithesis of searching out the enemy, and that you could do nothing so likely to put heart into the people at Rennes. A man declared yesterday that your camp was stronger than ever Châteaubriant had been, and that its inventor had become absorbed in schemes which an Alexander would never have countenanced.' Whether or no La Trémoille's methods were open to criticism upon grounds of strategical principle, it was certain that there were perils which might well result from delay, having regard to the dubious attitude of foreign powers. From Maximilian, indeed, who had got himself imprisoned by his rebellious subjects in Flanders, no more help could be looked for at present, and war and sickness had reduced to a thousand effectives the contingent of fifteen hundred men which he had contributed in the previous summer. But

[1] *Correspondance de Charles VIII*, ed. La Trémoille, p. 73.

there were other quarters upon which Graville was keeping an anxious eye; he was suspicious of England, not too happy about Spain, and undisguisedly worried about d'Albret; and before long the event to some extent justified his forebodings.

Not more than four weeks had passed from the time when La Trémoille had turned the first sod in his fortified camp at Châteaubriant when the French agents in Brittany sent intelligence that 'Monsieur d'Albret is at Quipercorentin [Quimper] and Monsieur de Squales [Lord Scales] at Saint-Malo.' 'Thank God,' they were able to add,[1] 'neither of them is very strongly accompanied.' The English party consisted of some 700 or 800 adventurers whom Scales had smuggled across the Channel in breach of his sovereign's express injunctions. Henry VII had spoken fair words to the French envoy, written most friendly letters to the King, and forbidden on pain of death that any of his subjects should go on service overseas without his permission. Scales, he said, had got away unknown to him;[2] and had he desired to take part in the Breton quarrel, he would have seen to it that his intervention should have been more effectual. Certainly, Scales' band was not of a size to cause much uneasiness to La Trémoille, and before it had been a week on Breton soil it fell into an ambush set for it by the French commandant at Dol, and escaped only with the loss of a hundred prisoners and more than two hundred dead (29 May). Yet the remnant of the force produced a moral effect out of all proportion to its actual fighting value. Rumour magnified its numbers, and it stood in Breton eyes for an evidence of English goodwill and an earnest of English assistance.

The force with which d'Albret had landed at Quimper was a more substantial contribution to the military might of Brittany, consisting as it did of some 4,000 or 5,000 men. Most of them had been raised by d'Albret himself in southern France, for Ferdinand of Aragon, though more hostile to

[1] *Correspondance de Charles VIII*, ed. La Trémoille, p. 113.

[2] Scales, says Bacon, had gone to Brittany, in contempt of the King's refusal of permission, 'either being unruly, or out of conceit that the King would not inwardly dislike that which he would not openly avow': 'Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh', in the *Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, vol. vi, p. 72.

France than was the King of England, had proved but little less lukewarm in support of Francis II, and a thousand men represented the sum of d'Albret's recruiting achievement in Spain. Ferdinand felt little inclination to further those matrimonial projects in Brittany which furnished the motive for d'Albret's activities. It was for those projects that Alain had thought it worth while to violate the solemn undertakings which he had so lately given to the King at Nontron. The explanation did nothing to soften the resentment with which Madame regarded his perfidy, and she took care that his conduct should be known in its true colours. 'Last year, as you may be aware,' wrote the King to the town of Lectoure,[1] 'the Seigneur d'Albret without having received any provocation collected a great number of soldiers and in divers places allied himself with those who were evil intentioned towards us, to the intent that he might make war upon us and plunder our kingdom. But with the aid of God and of our good and loyal servants, and by great promptness and diligence, such a resistance was offered to him that he and his folk were constrained to throw themselves into Nontron, in which place he was so straitly besieged as to have to sue for pardon through our captains there. He said that he had followed a mistaken course, that he would never do anything to cause us displeasure, and that thenceforth he would be loyal and true to us, and would serve us against all the world, especially against such of our subjects as might be guilty of disobedience or rebellion in act or aim, and thereto would solemnly pledge himself in such manner as we might desire. Supposing that his intentions were good and that he would keep his word, we accorded him the grace which divers persons requested for him, on condition of having his solemn oath and seal as aforesaid. Nevertheless, he has ungratefully slighted the grace we showed him and the favour repeatedly promised to him, and on the pretence of joining us has striven to go off to Nantes, there to make common cause with those assembled to attack and levy war upon us and our realm; but being let in the accomplishment of his evil enterprise, he has returned to the place whence he came, and there is doing his utmost to raise troops and to devise schemes to

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. i, pp. 289–92.

our prejudice and to the burden and oppression of our people; wherein must steps be taken. Touching his pretence that he meant to come and serve and obey us in accordance with his promises, the thing is improbable and incredible, for he has sent letters, messages, and solemn undertakings in all directions to our open and avowed enemies; and therewith has collected troops without any excuse, seeing that peace was established, and that he might have come to us without danger, having received from us all the assurances he asked for. He may say that he has collected his men to send them to the Marshal of Brittany, who was in our interest; but he has long known that the Marshal has forsaken our cause and turned against us. Likewise, should he maintain that he was sending the said men to the Seigneur de Saint-Cere,[1] to fill the ranks of the company we gave him, he knew well that those ranks were full. Under colour of these false and evil pretences he aimed at securing for them a passage to the said place, to serve against us. In proof whereof he has so contrived by his letters and messages that the Seigneur de Saint-Cere and several others in the said company have quitted our service, notwithstanding promises made and pay received, and have gone over to our said rebellious and disobedient subjects. Thereby may everyone clearly perceive that his conduct is and has been far removed from that to which he was in duty and in honour bound.'

When May was drawing to a close, a Breton embassy approached the French, to request a truce with a view to negotiations for a peace. Though Graville assured La Trémoille that the truce would be nothing but a farce, it was thought inexpedient peremptorily to reject a pacific overture. Madame was bound to recognize the imprudence of alienating public opinion in France, where there were many feudal sympathizers with the Dukes of Brittany and Orleans, and, by too naked a display of her designs, of converting into certainties the suspicions of the English, who relished but little the prospect of a French conquest and absorption of their ancient ally. She thought it wiser to 'entertain overtures made in the alleged interests of peace,

[1] Perhaps the Seigneur de Saint-Cricq is intended: see M. Pélicier's note, *Lettres de Charles VIII*, vol. i, p. 192.

and thereby to suffer damage, than to let it be said that we would have nothing to do with any good treaty '.[1] As one fruitless prolongation succeeded another, however, the patience of the French Government wore increasingly thin ; and at last on the 1st July Charles wrote to his commander-in-chief : ' Their policy is one of dissimulation, and we see no prospect of achieving good results but by force. They have requested another ten days' truce, which we have peremptorily refused. . . . Make war as vigorously as you can, and leave them no leisure to execute repairs, lay in provisions, or make useful preparations. You shall without fail be furnished with the supplies of men, victuals, guns, and other necessaries for the siege you wot of. They persist that their deeds will tally with their professions, but, as the saying is, he who consorts with a dog ought not to carry too short a stick.'

La Trémoille had seen to it that his stick should grow no shorter while the Breton dog was still at large. Throughout the negotiations he had kept his army on a war footing, refused furlough, and given regular pay, to check desertions ; and he had also availed himself of the interval to secure a reinforcement of 2,000 Swiss and to replenish his stock of arms. Having already (19 May) captured and destroyed Ancenis, which completed his preparations in the south, he was now only waiting for a resumption of hostilities to deal with Fougères, which barred the road into the northern portion of the province. As soon, therefore, as the armistice expired, he marched northwards, and on the 12th July appeared before that fortress. Though one of the strongest places in Brittany, and defended by a body of between two and three thousand picked troops, Fougères was as powerless as Châteaubriant or Ancenis to withstand the destructive fire of the French guns, and at the end of a week's siege it surrendered with the honours of war.

By this sudden collapse the Breton head-quarters at Rennes were taken completely by surprise. Thinking it impossible that so strong a place could succumb so rapidly, they had frittered away in vacillation and debate the few precious days in which a definite step for the relief of the town might have been taken. Their procrastination arose

[1] *Correspondance de Charles VIII*, ed. La Trémoille, p. 173.

in part from the personal jealousies which still enveloped the question of the young Duchess' marriage and in part from a real and radical divergence of opinion about military policy. Ought they to run the risk of the pitched battle which would be the almost inevitable outcome of an attempt to relieve Fougères ? Rieux thought not. In his view, a defeat would entail consequences too grave to be encountered, for the troops would be demoralized, the people terrified, the towns alarmed and endangered, and the province left at the mercy of the victorious foe. Sooner than hazard all on a single throw he would have Brittany play for safety. The choice, he considered, lay between two courses. Either they might take up a secure position in front of the great town of Rennes, and thence sally forth as occasion should offer to harass the invader, cut off his foragers, and intercept his supplies : or they might distribute their forces amongst the frontier fortresses and there await the coming of winter, which would make it impossible for any army, however formidable, to keep the field. In either event, though Fougères might be lost, time would be gained, and time meant a hope of that concerted action on the part of foreign powers wherein alone the salvation of Brittany was now to be sought. The advice was sound, but it did not appeal to the Marshal's colleagues. Persuaded that their army would disperse, if condemned to inaction, and concerned for the preservation of Fougères, of the surrender of which they were still ignorant, they resolved to march to the relief of the beleaguered fortress, and to offer battle, should the French attempt resistance.

The Royal army consisted of some 15,000 men, of whom 7,000 came from the mountains of Switzerland, that 'country of fine men', as Charles justly called it, which had sent forth its sons to display their prowess on so many stricken fields. The Breton army, when it paraded at Andouillé on the 24th July, numbered 10,500 of all ranks, approximately one-half being composed of German, English, Spanish, and Béarnais mercenaries and volunteers. On the 26th July it was joined by the garrison of Fougères, numbering 2,500 men, and this accession of strength did something to redress the inequality of numbers between the two armies. But that inequality was not the most serious

disadvantage under which the Breton army laboured. La Trémoille's force was a body of trained and disciplined troops, well armed and supplied, furnished with an admirable artillery, capably led, and animated by a common purpose. To oppose this formidable machine, the Bretons must rely largely upon raw and undisciplined levies, and, what was worse, their whole host was permeated from top to bottom by jealousy and suspicion. On the night of the 24th, for instance, the Breton camp was aroused by a disturbance among the troops ; the French Princes believed that Rieux and d'Albret were inciting their men to attack them ; and Orleans and Orange, snatching up their arms, roundly accused them of treachery. Before this misunderstanding had been cleared up, fresh difficulties arose, for which the open bickerings among the leaders may well have been responsible. The Breton foot broke suddenly into one of those outbursts of anti-foreign mania which periodically demonstrated the intensity of provincial feeling. They declared that the French Princes were plotting to save their own skins by selling Brittany to their master ; the embassy by which Dunois purported to explain his presence at the French Court was a sham ; he was there to hatch treason against the Breton Duke ; and Orleans and Orange were privy to, and would act as the instruments of, his designs. To calm the excitement, the Princes were obliged to give an incontrovertible proof of loyalty to the Breton cause, and announced that they would relinquish their commands, so that they might fight on foot in the Breton or German ranks. Such dissensions contrasted unfavourably with the spirit of unity by which the Royal army was animated, and augured ill for the outcome of the ordeal which was now rapidly approaching.

Their plans changed by the loss of Fougères, the Bretons determined to march against Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier, a small place held by the French, near which Rieux had been lying encamped. On Monday, the 28th July, Rieux set out, marching with his army in order of battle. He himself commanded the advance guard ; the centre was entrusted to d'Albret ; and the Sieur de Châteaubriant, Rieux's son-in-law, brought up the rear. Lord Scales' men were placed under Rieux, and, to mislead the enemy as to the size of

the English contingent, some seventeen hundred Bretons were decked out in coats emblazoned with the red cross of St. George.

Meanwhile La Trémoille had set out from Fougères early in the morning of the same day, and at midday reached Saint-Aubin-du Cormier. Though aware that the Bretons were advancing, he seems not to have known by how small a distance he was now separated from them, supposing in all probability that they were still holding the position which they had lately taken up at Vieux-Vy two leagues away. The spot at which the Bretons had in fact halted was hidden from view by the Wood of Usel, and the French army was still filing in marching order along a narrow road when the head of the column emerged from the wood and discovered the enemy drawn up in battle order not eight hundred yards away. Had the Bretons attacked at once, the day must almost certainly have been theirs. Rieux urged immediate action, but was opposed by d'Albret, who wanted to make some preliminary changes in the disposition of his troops; and La Trémoille profited by the respite thus afforded him to deploy from the wood under cover of his cavalry and to set his own forces in battle order.

The *Lande de la Rencontre*, as the spot has since been called, was not unsuited to the events of which it was about to become the theatre. An open and undulating moor, broken only by a few granite rocks, was there bounded by the Wood of Usel, which stretched northwards from the vicinity of Saint-Aubin towards Mézières, and by the larger forest of Haute-Sève, which extended westwards in the direction of Andouillé. A little stream, the Riquelon brook, traversed the space that separated the two woods, the ground sloping gently down to it on either side. The Bretons had halted on the crest of the rise to the north of the stream, at the point of divergence of the Sens and Mézières roads, with their left resting on the Usel wood and their right covered by artillery and baggage. La Trémoille deployed to the south of the brook, at the spot now occupied by Moronval Farm. His right wing, under Adrien de l'Hôpital, rested on the wood; his own division occupied the centre; and Marshal de Baudricourt commanded on the left. A body of picked mounted men was placed under the

orders of a Neapolitan soldier of fortune, Jacobo Galiota, whom the King had specially commended to La Trémoille as a man of judgement, ability, and great military experience.[1] Already superior in numbers and in the quality of their artillery and cavalry, the French gained a further advantage from their disposition, for unlike the Breton leaders, who were holding a fifth of their men in reserve, La Trémoille had so placed his troops as to throw the whole weight of his effectives into the scale.

The battle opened with an artillery duel which did some damage on both sides. Rieux then threw his men against the French left. Charging gallantly, with the English in their midst, they forced the French back for a hundred yards or more; but two of their leaders, Lord Scales and Claude de Montfort, fell in the *mêlée*, the attack weakened, and the French rallied. Meanwhile the Breton centre had begun to be harassed by the French guns, and a German captain moved from his position, to get his men under cover. The movement left a gap in the Breton line, and Galiota threw himself into it. Though he himself fell, mortally wounded, his charge decided the fortune of the day, for it broke the Breton line, and carried confusion right into the ranks of the rear-guard itself. Any chance which the Bretons may ever have had of retrieving the position was then destroyed by the explosion of their powder magazine in the Haute-Sève wood, an event which completed their demoralization, and turned confusion into panic. The cavalry fled, taking Rieux and d'Albret with them. For the unhappy infantry, unable to escape so lightly, the battle changed into a rout, and the rout into a massacre. To the English in particular quarter was refused, and of the Bretons who had gone into battle wearing the cross of St. George scarcely a man was left alive. The French, who estimated their own dead at 1,400, claimed that the enemy had lost 6,000 in killed and prisoners. The Breton army had not merely been

[1] The Venetian Signory were in the act of appointing him their Captain-General, when he fell in this battle: see P. M. Perret, 'Jacques Galéot et la République de Venise' in *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, vol. lii (1891), pp. 590–614; and the same author's article on 'Boffille de Juge, Comte de Castres, et la République de Venise' in *Annales du Midi*, vol. iii (1891), pp. 159–231 (at pp. 159–60).

defeated; it had ceased to exist. 'Never within living memory was there so wonderfully complete a rout.'[1]

Orleans and Orange were among the prisoners. The Duke was captured in the Wood of Usel, whither the stream of fugitives had borne him, and where he had striven, gallantly but in vain, to stem the rout. Orange had also fought doggedly on until it became plain that all was lost, when he had divested himself of the black cross of Brittany and thrown himself on the ground among the dead infantrymen; but his ruse had failed, for he had been recognized and arrested by an archer who had formerly served in his company. A chronicler would have us believe that that night La Trémoille invited the French Princes and their captured compatriots to sup with him in his tent at Saint-Aubin; that two Franciscan monks entered the tent at the conclusion of the meal; and that in the silence which followed their ominous apparition the general in stern tones thus addressed his guests: 'Messieurs les Princes, upon you it is for the King, and not for me, to pass judgement; but as for you other gentlemen, who have been false to your King and country, you must now prepare for the death which is the meet punishment of your offence'. This dramatic story rests upon questionable authority, and may be dismissed as apocryphal. It was true, however, that the Court had evinced a marked disposition to take stern measures with French gentlemen found fighting in the enemy ranks, and La Trémoille had more than once been lectured upon the importance of guarding such captives carefully.[2] After a brief confinement at Saint-Aubin, Orleans and Orange were removed under escort, the one to Sablé and ultimately to Bourges, the other to the dungeons of the great feudal fortress at Angers, where the first Plantagenets had kept grim watch over the fair valley of the Loire. There, if we are to believe an admirer of Anne de Beaujeu, 'he was marvellously hissed and derided by the common folk of the town, who would have lynched him but for the presence of the King's troops'.[3]

[1] Charles VIII to the Flemish Estates, 9 August 1488: Gachard, *Lettres Inédites de Maximilien*, pp. 146–7.

[2] See the letters quoted in the note at the end of this chapter, pp. 171–2.

[3] Jaligny, ed. Godefroy, p. 54.

News of the victory was carried quickly into France, and lost nothing in the passage. As men rang their church bells and built their bonfires in those last July days, they told each other how thirty thousand Bretons had marched to battle at Saint-Aubin, how eleven thousand had fallen upon the field and five thousand more in the long pursuit, and how many hundreds of high-born prisoners had been captured by the conquerors. For a time the King himself was left in doubt of the true extent of the success which had graced his arms. 'Yesterday, about eight o'clock in the morning,' he wrote [1] to La Trémoille on Wednesday, the 30th July, two days after the battle, 'one of our gallopers came in from you and told us for certain that you had defeated the Bretons, and that our brother of Orleans had been taken and the Sire d'Elbret killed with divers others, whereat we were very joyful. But for a long while afterwards came no other news, not, indeed, until your page arrived at about four o'clock in the afternoon, and he, though he gave us a good report, had nothing in writing. Soon afterwards the post came in with your joint letters, which greatly rejoiced us, for they informed us more completely. We give you our warmest thanks for the good and great service you have rendered. That service is no small one, and we know well that the issue is due to your prudence and skill. Be assured that it shall never be forgotten.'

Before Brittany could shake off the stupor into which it was plunged by the disaster that had overtaken its army, another considerable misfortune befell its cause. Along with Nantes and Rennes the town of Saint-Malo was one of the bulwarks of the Duchy's independence, and it was also one of the chief channels of its communication with its friends abroad. Defended by ramparts, rocks, and sea, and accessible only by the long and narrow causeway that joined it to the mainland, the place had always passed for being impregnable. Charles believed it to be 'one of the finest and strongest places in Brittany or anywhere else',[2] and when the notion of attacking it was first mooted, Graville warned La Trémoille that it was one of the strongest places in the world, and that it would be very

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. ii, pp. 187–8.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

difficult to take it by force, if there were men in it to defend it. It was now held by a garrison of 1,200 men, and so implicit was the prevalent belief in its security that enormous quantities of portable wealth had been transferred to it from the country round about. When La Trémoille's forces appeared before the town, the garrison prepared to offer resistance, but they reckoned without the townsfolk, who were fearful of the fate that would overtake themselves and their possessions, should the place be carried by assault, and compelled the governor to capitulate. Under the terms of a convention signed by La Trémoille on the 14th August the soldiers composing the garrison were to march unarmed from the town, and the whole contents of the town and port other than the possessions of the townsfolk, were to be forfeit to the besiegers. An enormous booty thus fell to the French, and at one and the same blow Brittany lost one of her strongest places and best sea-ports and a not inconsiderable portion of such wealth as still remained to her after the calamities of recent years.

Unless Brittany were now to submit to political extinction, she must appeal to the clemency of the King of France for the grant of terms by which, upon conditions however hard, her independence might be preserved. Upon the question of the way in which this appeal ought to be met the French Council was divided. Madame advocated stern measures: she had fought the war to secure an end which her statesmanship perceived to be vital to her country, and she was reluctant to fling away the prize in the very moment when victory had placed it within her grasp. Her advice was combated by the Chancellor, Guillaume de Rochefort, who opposed right to might and disputed the moral propriety of the way of violence. It had been argued, he said, that the conquest of Brittany was easy, but no one had paused to consider whether it might be just. It had been said that the Duke had aided the rebel Princes, and had levied war on his own suzerain; but was not his conduct excused by the policy of Louis XI in acquiring the rights of the House of Blois, and by the more recent action of the Crown in disposing of the Duke's heritage by a compact entered into with his own barons? The Royal claim to Brittany ought to be examined, and it would be proper

to press it only if upon examination it should appear to be just.

The effect which the Chancellor's remonstrance produced upon the sensitive and not ungenerous nature of the young monarch became visible when the ambassadors of Francis II presented themselves at the French Court. In tones of humility and contrition Dunois and Lescun appealed to Charles to have pity upon the Duke and his unhappy country. He answered at once and without reference to his advisers.[1] He told them that he regretted the war, but was not responsible for it, since it had been begun without provocation by the Duke and the rebel Princes. Though all the faults were on their side, they had shown no spirit of conciliation. His own part had been to defend himself when his country was threatened; and God, who always protected France, had vouchsafed him a complete victory. Had such a triumph befallen the Duke and his associates, they would have shown little disposition to make concessions, and it was within his own power to inflict a signal punishment for their rebellion. Leaving vengeance to God, however, he would commission his councillors to negotiate peace, for he was ready to agree to equitable conditions.

The conference met at Marshal de Gié's country house at Le Verger, and concluded peace on the 20th August. The Duke undertook to dismiss all the foreigners who had taken part in the war, and never again to summon strangers to his aid. To obviate the risk of alliances hostile to the interests of France, he agreed that his daughters should not be married without the Royal consent. He would perform homage for the Duchy, and would acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Parlement of Paris in the manner in which his predecessors had been wont to recognize it.[2]

[1] 'Sur le champ, de luy-mesme, et sans sur cela prendre aucun conseil, il leur fit réponse': Jaligny, p. 56.

[2] These provisions do not appear in the Treaty as set out in the *Ordonnances des Rois de France de la Troisième Race*, vol. xx, pp. 95–8, or in Dumont, *Corps Universel Diplomatique*, vol. iii, Part II, pp. 209–10. They are to be found in Dom H. Morice, *Mémoires pour servir de Preuves à l'Histoire Ecclesiastique et Civile de Bretagne* (Paris, 1742–6), vol. iii, col. 601: 'Item, à ce que le Duc qui est vassal du Roi se acquitte envers ledit sieur, il fera l'hommage audit sieur le plustost qu'il pourra, ansi qu'il doit et comme il y est tenu. Item, le Duc obéira à la Cour de Parlement de Paris, et souffrira

To guarantee the due performance of the obligations assumed by the Duke, the treaty was to be confirmed under seal by the lords spiritual and temporal, the churchmen, the gentry, the towns, and the three estates of the province, who agreed to submit to ecclesiastical censures in the event of contravention, and to be liable for a fine of 200,000 *écus*, which was to be secured upon the good towns in general and upon the city and county of Nantes in particular. By way of further security the King was to retain possession of Saint-Malo, Dinan, Fougères, and Saint-Aubin; and those places were to pass to the Crown in perpetuity, should the Duke violate his undertaking with regard to his daughters' marriages. The King, on his part, would evacuate Brittany with the exception of the places mentioned, and would waive his claim to an indemnity; and there was to be a mutual restoration of property confiscated by the belligerents.

Within three weeks of the signature of the peace Francis II, ill, humiliated, and heart-broken, passed to the grave (9 September), and the Breton coronet was transferred to the head of a child. By his last will the Duke appointed Rieux tutor of his daughters, and entrusted the care of their persons to the Countess of Laval. From his death-bed he also made a last appeal to his triumphant enemies to accord to the gentlemen who had fought in his defence the pardon which they had refused to bestow by the Treaty of Le Verger; and Charles, moved by his supplication, granted an amnesty to all the rebels except Orange and Orleans. The young King's conduct was generous, but it was not so certain that it was wise. That could best be judged in the light of the new phase upon which the Breton question was about to enter.

Note. The following extracts from the correspondence of Charles VIII are of interest in connexion with the legend of La Trémoille's supper-party. On the 25th March 1488 he wrote to La Trémoille: 'Touching that which has been done before Châteaubriant, whereof you write, we thank you, and in the matter of those traitors whom you have handed over to the provost-marshals you have done exceedingly well; nothing in the world will more quickly bring

que les Arrests et Jugemens d'icelle soient mis à exécution dûe, comme ont faits ses prédecesseurs.'

this war to an end.' After blaming La Trémoille for the delay which had occurred in punishing these traitors, the King wrote again on the 2nd April, after the capture of Marcillé : ' Touching what you say in your said letters that you will see if there are [among the prisoners] any Frenchmen or others who have formerly sworn fealty to us and taken our wages, and that, if any such are found, you will deliver them to the provost-marshals, it will be well done if, when they or their like are taken, justice is done upon them without sparing any of them, for you must understand clearly that this is the best way to bring this war to an end '.

On the 5th May the King wrote : ' We have just heard that that wise man, Messire Aymar de Prie, has gone off to Nantes with twenty or thirty men. It is, as you know, a fool's errand ; and if we do not make an example, as we have said to you and have cautioned everyone else, we shall never have done with this war, for the kingdom is so big that fools, if they be not frightened, can assemble in over-large numbers. And in this matter take every possible care to hand over forthwith to the Provost-marshal Postel every one of our subjects and of those who have ever been in our service whom you may capture, and we will pay for them at the rate of twenty *écus* a man-at-arms and ten *écus* an archer.'

Finally, after getting the news of Saint-Aubin Charles wrote : ' You do not tell us the number of the other prisoners or how all goes on. Take care not to allow a single one to be ransomed or set free, but keep them all well guarded.' See *Lettres de Charles VIII*, vol. i, pp. 320, 323, 332, and vol. ii, pp. 31, 188.

VI

THE COALITION AGAINST FRANCE

The news of the French victory at Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier and of the death of Francis II was unwelcome tidings for the friends of Brittany. They might, indeed, draw some comfort from the reflection that in a moment of chivalrous self-denial the King of France had forborne to press home the advantage which the triumph of his arms had secured to him ; but there was no certainty, there was not even much probability, that matters would be allowed to rest where they were ; the hand which Charles had withdrawn might at any moment be extended afresh to gather the fruits of victory ; and it was clear that, should hostilities be resumed, the Bretons could not contrive much longer to sustain an unequal contest. The independence of Brittany must then depend, not upon the exertions which the exhausted and distracted province could make in its own defence, but upon the energy of the foreign powers which desired to secure its preservation. In the light of the transformation wrought by the political dexterity of Madame and the military genius of La Trémoille, England, Austria, and Spain must reconsider their Breton policy, and, if they would avert the disaster which they feared, must substitute energetic action for their hitherto somewhat languid support.

Of these three powers Spain was for the time being the least formidable All the energies of her rulers were being concentrated upon the task of subduing her Moorish invaders, and the demands of a life-and-death struggle would preclude an earnest intervention in other countries. Subject, however, to the prior claims of the Moorish enterprise, the Catholic sovereigns could be counted upon to support any combination against France, and to assist to the best of their ability any project which had for its aim the frustration of French ambition. It was a cherished object of their policy to recover the provinces of Roussillon and Cerdagne, of which the French Crown had deprived them ;

and the greater the embarrassments which could be devised for the French Government, the stronger was the probability that Spanish diplomacy might achieve the cession of the coveted territories. But the question of the mortgaged provinces did not fully explain the nature and extent of Spanish hostility, for fear played as large a part as greed in determining the attitude of King Ferdinand and his consort. If Anne de Beaujeu should succeed in completing the work which Louis XI had begun, if she should subdue the feudal opposition, conquer Brittany, and hand over to her brother a kingdom united, prosperous, and strong, then France would occupy a place in European politics which would be little to the taste of an ambitious neighbour. The bitter hatred of France which is the dominant note in Ferdinand's political correspondence was inspired by his dread of such a consummation. 'Ferdinand, as he himself confessed, was afraid that France might render herself the mistress of the world; to prevent this was the chief object of his life.'[1] There were two ways in which the object might be achieved, either by enmity and the use of force, or by alliance and the employment of guile, and of these methods the latter had already been the subject of an unsuccessful experiment. Charles had been offered the hand of a Spanish Infanta, and the most persistent efforts had been made to induce Anne de Beaujeu to favour the match. When argument and flattery had both been tried in vain, the Spanish rulers had had recourse to less honourable expedients, and in pursuance of secret instructions under the hand of the Queen of Castille, Madame had been promised that she should receive whatever assistance she might require to perpetuate her Regency, that she should choose the time when the Spanish bride should enter France, and that a sum of 400,000 francs should be paid over to her as the price of her support. To these cajoleries, however, Anne had turned a deaf ear; the Spanish Court had reluctantly recalled its ambassadors; and Ferdinand, thrown back upon a policy of opposition, had begun to seek alliances among the enemies of France. His representatives were now in England for the purpose of arranging a Spanish

[1] Bergenroth, *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, vol. i, Introduction, p. lx; London, 1862.

match for the Prince of Wales, and the question of Brittany was prominent in the negotiations. Not a stone must be left unturned, he was urging upon them, to rescue the province from the clutches of the French : above all else, Brittany must be saved.

The policy of the English Government was much more difficult to forecast. To Henry VII himself the prospect of a war with France offered few attractions, for taste, temperament, prudence, and gratitude conspired to disincline him for hostilities. Cold, calculating, eminently practical, economical if not avaricious, actuated by no thirst for military renown and unaffected by the glamour of romantic adventure, Henry desired to concentrate his energies upon domestic problems—to strengthen his personal power, to consolidate his dynasty, and to reconstruct his finances. Neither could he very well forget the extent of his personal debt to France, nor refrain from asking himself with what show of honour he could attack the Government which had offered an asylum to the fugitive, befriended the exile, and helped to launch the adventurer upon the expedition which had given him his crown. He was not, it is true, the sort of ruler to allow his policy to be influenced overmuch by sentimental considerations ; but, if there were any lack of gratitude, caution would supply the deficiency. The position of the first Tudor was not so impregnable as to warrant the luxury of foreign entanglements, and Continental commitments might well provide an occasion for domestic revolt. The probability of insurrection—and the danger of it, should it occur—would be greatly increased by a war with France : the support which Henry himself had received had been Madame's answer to the enmity of Richard III ; and if Henry should intervene in Brittany, the French Regent might well contrive to dispatch another claimant to a second Bosworth Field. The recent episode of Lambert Simnel was a proof that opportunities would not be wanting ; and if Henry had disavowed Lord Scales and maintained relations of apparent friendliness with the Government of France, it might be conjectured that prudence had been as influential as sentiment in the determination of his policy. ' He was ', says Bacon, ' utterly unwilling (howsoever he gave out) to

enter into a war with France. A fame of a war he liked well, but not an achievement; for the one he thought would make him richer, and the other poorer; and he was possessed with many secret fears touching his own people, which he was therefore loth to arm, and put weapons into their hands. Yet notwithstanding, as a prudent and courageous Prince, he was not so averse from a war, but that he was resolved to choose it rather than to have Brittaine carried by France; being so great and opulent a duchy, and situate so opportunely to annoy England either for coast or trade.' [1]

The attitude of Henry VII is exactly defined in this passage. Pacific though his own personal inclinations might be, there were powerful motives at work to impel the English sovereign in the direction of war. He had in the first place to reckon with the temper of his subjects, restless and warlike after a long period of civil strife, and imbued with a passionate hatred of France. The French ambassadors reported upon the feeling, with unmistakable apprehensions for its probable results. 'The King of England lately told the Archbishop of Sens and the other Royal ambassadors accredited to him that the King [Charles VIII] is King of the French, but that he [Henry] is not King of the English, and that the Mayor of London has in ward in the Tower of London one of King Edward's sons, whom he often threatens to make King, if he [Henry] does not obey the people's wishes; and the English in their King's presence told the said ambassadors that Brittany is a small Britain, and that whatever their King's wishes might be, they would go so far as to put England's last man in the field to provide succour and aid for the Bretons.' [2] It has been justly remarked by a distinguished historian that 'the

[1] Bacon, 'Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh', in the *Works*, ed. Spedding, vol. vi, pp. 67–8.

[2] Foulquart, 'Mémoires', in *Revue de Champagne et de Brie*, vol. vii, p. 197. On the 4th April 1490 the Milanese ambassador in Rome wrote as follows to the Duke of Milan: 'The English were as eager as possible for that war in Britanny, especially as they well knew that, if the Most Christian should vindicate his authority in Britanny, it would prove most detrimental to the English, who, moreover, have taken heart because they hope and expect that the King and Queen of Spain will help them, to be revenged for Perpignan:' *Calendar of State Papers, Milanese*, vol. i, p. 255.

expediency of non-intervention on the continent, save to procure advantages for English trade, and in particular the expediency of abandoning all idea of recovering the old French possessions, is clear to us now as we look back upon our history'. But, as he points out, the judgement of contemporaries was very different. 'The English nation was moved by two great political passions or prejudices, hatred of the French and hatred of the Scots. From Calais and the forts of the Pale English men-at-arms looked covetously on the plains of Picardy; and the captainship of Calais, the great outpost against France, was one of the most important and responsible offices in the gift of the crown. Although Normandy and Guienne had now been lost for more than thirty years, the King of England still retained the title of King of France, as though time would surely bring him once more to his own. Every occasion of embarrassment to the French Government seemed to the ordinary Englishman to give a legitimate opening for interference in France; every increase in French power seemed to him to be a direct menace to England. . . . It was clear that France intended to devour the Bretons. . . . English blood had been shed in battle, and was England to look on quietly while the great and active seafaring population of Brittany was being absorbed by the power of her ancient enemy?'[1]

Henry asked himself this question, and answered it in the negative. Little as he might desire to quarrel with Anne de Beaujeu, he could not as an English ruler contemplate with equanimity the impending extinction of Breton independence; nor was his throne so secure that he could venture to flout the resolute will of his people. He must risk the enmity of France, to avoid more formidable dangers. Whatever the perils of her anger, her friendship offered no protection against the advent of a pretender supported by Austria and Spain and welcomed by a discontented nation; and the least perilous course to adopt in a perplexing conjuncture seemed to be to enter the coalition against France. Accordingly he had opened negotiations with Spain for a treaty of peace and commerce upon the basis of a marriage alliance;

[1] H. A. L. Fisher, *History of England from the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of Henry VIII* (London, 1910), pp. 25–6 and 29.

and before the year was out, English envoys were active in Spain, in Portugal, in Brittany, and at the Courts of the King of the Romans and of the Archduke Philip. Giovanni de Giglis, the Collector of Peter's Pence in England, had been right when he had anticipated the repercussion of French successes on the policy of neighbouring powers. 'It is reported', he had told the Pope in the early autumn, 'that the Duke of Brittany is dead, and that well-nigh the whole province is in the hands, or about to pass into the possession, of the French. The situation of Flanders is known. At Calais, an English city in France across the Channel, a French plot has been discovered, about which a great stir was made at first, but now it does not seem so perilous an affair. The King has reinforced the garrison with 1,500 soldiers, artillery, and stores. There are ambassadors here from the Commons of Flanders, and some are also expected from the King of the Romans. . . . A war with France is to be apprehended. Negotiations are on foot for an alliance between the King of England and the King of Castille, and for the marriage of their children, though this is not yet public.' 'King Henry', wrote the same observer again after a brief interval, 'is compelled at present to defend the Breton interests for the defence of his own kingdom, the affairs of Brittany being so bound up with those of England that the latter are necessarily endangered by the Breton catastrophe. He has sent ambassadors to the King of the French for peace, and if that be effected all will be well; but if not, he has determined to defend Brittany and the orphan Duchess with all his might.'[1]

The English Parliament, when it met in the second week of January 1489, was told that war was impending, and was asked for a large grant wherewith the cost of martial preparation might be defrayed. The Commons were informed that Henry's purpose was to enlist an army of 10,000 archers for a year's service against the ancient enemies of the realm, and the sum of £100,000 was suggested as a subsidy not inappropriate to the occasion. No one in his senses could suppose that a year's campaigning by an expeditionary force would suffice to guarantee the permanent preservation of Breton independence, and the national

[1] *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, vol. i, pp. 172–3 and 177–8.

pastime of a French war began to lose some of its attraction when the payment of so large a bill was demanded as the prerequisite of its indulgence. The tax was a failure, the attempt to raise it provoking stirrings of rebellion which would have given food for meditation to a sovereign with much more ardour for the Breton cause than ever Henry had possessed. The fact was that those who clamoured for a war with France looked for a revival of the good old times when the English gentleman crossed the Channel for a feudal holiday, lived in comfort on the hereditary foe, and in his own good time returned in the pride of victory, enriched by the spoils of defeated armies and the ransoms of captured knights. Introduced by an onerous fiscal demand, the Breton business wore a less engaging aspect; and chastened patriots concluded that times had changed, and had not changed for the better.

If the popular enthusiasm for war was dashed by the fiscal measures of the Government, Henry's ancillary diplomacy did nothing to revive it. The treaty of Medina del Campo, in which at the end of March the long negotiations with Spain issued, contained little to commend them to Henry's subjects, who were made to pay a stiff price for the privilege of the alliance which was to bolster up his unstable throne. Whilst England was to be hustled into immediate action against France, Spain was to be at liberty to postpone until the next year her own participation in the conflict. Still greater was the advantage conferred upon the Catholic sovereigns by the provisions which regulated the making of peace. They were to be at liberty to go out of the war in the event of a voluntary restoration by France of Roussillon and Cerdagne, an event which was not wholly improbable, since those provinces were not of first-rate importance, and the retention of them was not vital either to the safety or to the honour of France. The discretion in favour of peace which the treaty reserved for the King of England was to be exercised only in the event of France offering a cession of Normandy and Guyenne, and that event was impossible so long as France retained a semblance of her present unity and a tithe of her present power. The advantages, personal to himself, accruing to Henry from the promise of an Infanta's hand for his son and

the agreement about her dowry were not such as to render these other proposals palatable to his people.

If Henry's diplomacy might seem to have been at fault in the negotiations with Spain, nobody could accuse him of allowing himself to be over-reached in the bargain which had been simultaneously struck with Brittany. No sentimental consideration had deterred him from exacting the full price for the support which he was proposing to offer to the 'orphan Duchess'. By the terms of his treaty with her (10 February) Henry undertook that a force of 6,000 English should serve the Duchess for a year. Brittany in return was to defray the entire cost of the contingent, and was to secure payment by giving up two of her strong places for occupation by Henry's troops. The Duchess was not to marry without Henry's consent; she was to enter into no alliance without his knowledge and approval, unless it were with the King of the Romans or the King of Spain, and then only if liberty were reserved for England to come in; and she was to assist the English in any enterprise which they might undertake for the recovery of their former French possessions.

The confederacy was rounded off by the alliance of Henry with Maximilian, whose will to injure France was as constant as his inability to achieve his purpose; and on the 14th February, at the instance of Spain, a treaty between the King of England and the King of the Romans was signed at Dordrecht.

While this triple alliance was in process of formation, Anne de Beaujeu had not sat idle. As regards England, the remedy lay ready to her hand; she had but to follow the traditional policy of her country, and to strengthen the secular alliance with England's hereditary foes across the Tweed. Studious from the first to preserve the amity of Scotland, Madame had recently been impelled by the threatening development of foreign politics to propose a more definite understanding, and a treaty had been concluded which provided that the Scots should take the field whenever France should find herself at war with the ancient enemy of both contracting parties. As regards Maximilian, Anne would have preferred to come to terms, since peace on the eastern frontiers would have conduced

to a speedier fruition of her Breton hopes. But if she could not have peace, she was ready for war, and ready to neutralize the hostility of Maximilian by her existing compact with his rebel subjects in Flanders, whilst the old friendship between France and his Hungarian enemies might at any time be quickened into a closer co-operation. 'Monseigneur,' she wrote to her brother on the 4th December 1488, 'you have also the Flemish affair on your hands, and if that could be disposed of by some good peace, you would the sooner succeed in Brittany. Nevertheless, seeing that the Flemings have declared for you, you must in no event suffer them to be worsted.' [1]

It was the 'Flemish affair' which had induced Maximilian to seek, and Henry Tudor to promise, the help of England against France. The King of the Romans was once more at loggerheads with his subjects in the Low Countries. The mutual hostility of Prince and people was perhaps inevitable. What the interests of the great Flemish commercial centres required was the security which peace guaranteed and the facilities for business intercourse which it offered; and these were the last things which they were likely to obtain from the policy of Maximilian, always engrossed in pursuing schemes of dynastic ambition, in following scatterbrained adventures, and, as his own father complained, in chasing political will-of-the-wisps. Whilst his repeated failures made him ridiculous, the crushing burden of his taxes and the unbridled licence of his brutal German soldiery made him odious to the Flemings. His French policy was detested by them. The Flemish communes wanted friendly relations and commercial intercourse with France, and their interests were bound up with the maintenance of the Treaty of Arras, which they regarded as the great bulwark of their commercial and political fortunes. They complained loudly of the pitiable condition to which war, dearth, and commercial interruption had reduced their country; of Maximilian's infractions of the Treaty of Arras; of his infidelity to the compact which he had made with themselves; and of his contemptuous disregard of their privileges. He would neither himself protect their country against his predatory soldiery nor

[1] Pélicier, *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu*, p. 155.

suffer it to protect itself; he loaded them with illegal impositions; and he refused to 'open the way into France for purposes of communication and business', as required by the treaty which had lately been made with his assent.[1] Everything that was bad in a black situation was laid to his charge, and along with evils justly attributable to his perversity he was held responsible for misfortunes which he had not produced, and could not have averted. By the action of profound but uncomprehended economic causes the commercial prosperity which had exalted the Flemish communes to a position of unexampled splendour was gradually being undermined. Moreover, whilst Ghent and Bruges were entering upon a visible decay, evidenced by a languishing of commerce, a decline of industry, and a decrease in population, the streets of their hated rival, Antwerp, were beginning to hum with the activity which had once been their own pride, and its marts to batten on the commerce which had been their own monopoly. Alive to the painful phenomenon, and aware of no other explanation, the Flemings ascribed it to the shortcomings, and even to the direct machinations, of their detested Austrian Prince.

Such was the temper of the communes, boding no good to their ruler, when at the end of January 1488 Maximilian, already at war with the people of Ghent, entered the town of Bruges at the head of a handful of German troops. Immediately after his arrival some manœuvres executed by his *landsknechte*, which were thought to possess a sinister significance, intensified the suspicions of the townsfolk, and the popular irritation culminated in a riot grave enough to alarm Maximilian for his personal safety. On the following night he rode to the town gates, with the intention of throwing them open to the troops encamped outside the city. He found every entrance guarded by armed bands, who denied him access. As in growing exasperation and alarm he galloped from one gate to another, the clatter of his horse's hoofs echoed in the empty streets; the sleeping city awoke to a frenzy of martial preparation; and the morning, when it dawned, found Maximilian shut up in the Cranenburg, the prisoner of an apprehensive and

[1] Gachard, *Lettres Inédites de Maximilien*, pp. 67–72.

exasperated mob. There he remained, humiliated by the execution of his supporters, and gravely concerned for his own safety, until on the 16th May he procured his release by a solemn treaty whereby he accorded a complete amnesty to the rebels, promised the immediate withdrawal of all German garrisons from the country, renounced his claim to the Regency during the minority of his infant son, and undertook to respect the compact by which his subjects had just placed themselves under the protection of the King of France.

Upon the sincerity of Maximilian in submitting to this mortifying capitulation it would be idle to speculate. It may be that his original intentions were honourable, but, if so, they did not long survive the temptations by which they were assailed. On the eve of his son's release the Emperor Frederick III had told the Estates of Hainault that 'as long as he lived he would persist in his endeavours to avenge his innocent son by the condign punishment of the Brugeois, even though the whole Empire were to be set in motion for the purpose'.[1] The old man had already taken steps to give effect to his menaces, and eight days after his release Maximilian was joined at Louvain by an Imperial army which was generally believed to number 20,000 men. The Pope, too, had espoused the cause of established authority; a sentence of general excommunication hung like a sword of Damocles over the city of Bruges; and the Archbishop of Cologne was invested with Legatine powers which would enable the spiritual weapon to be brandished in such an hour as might be meet for the discomfiture of wanton rebellion. Before the temptation held out by this union of temporal and ecclesiastical support the frail honour of the King of the Romans succumbed with scarcely a struggle. He was bound, he said, by an oath of service to the Emperor which took precedence of his pledge to the Flemings; from his engagements with them, extorted by violence, the Emperor had released him; and if he now resumed the arms which he had just sworn to lay down, he did so, not in his own behalf, but in deference to an Imperial

[1] L. Devillers, 'Le Hainault en 1482–1489', in *Compte Rendu des Séances de la Commission Royale d'Histoire*, Fourth Series, vol. xiv (Brussels, 1887), p. 206.

command which, as King of the Romans, he was bound to obey. The casuistry of the subterfuge served merely to enhance the enormity of the offence.

Philip of Cleves had stood surety for the observance of Maximilian's treaty. He now at once declared for the Flemings against Maximilian and for the treaty which he had guaranteed. He denied the Imperial claim to suzerainty in Flanders, denounced Frederick's interference, accused Maximilian of a design to annex the Low Countries to his hereditary dominions, and set up the title of Mary of Burgundy's son as the rightful heir to the Burgundian possessions. He was supported, not only by the Flemish communes, but also by the cities of Louvain and Brussels, which stood true to the anti-monarchical policy of bygone days, by the party of the Hoeks in Holland, which welcomed the opportunity of renewing their opposition to Maximilian, and by the Liégeois under Guillaume de la Marck. Nor was it to be supposed that the French Government would condemn d'Esquerdes to inactivity in the face of the Imperial invasion. With French assistance Philip of Cleves was able to hold his own against an army more imposing in appearance than in reality. The cost of the great host was a gigantic burden upon the attenuated resources of Frederick and his son, and the difficulty of provisioning it was almost insuperable. As early as July, d'Esquerdes reported that the Germans in the County of Flanders were in great necessity, a penny loaf costing them three shillings,[1] and he did not believe that there was a man in the Imperial ranks who did not long to be back across the Rhine. The Princes of the Empire had entered reluctantly upon the campaign, and in the course which it was pursuing found nothing to modify their disinclination. For six whole weeks the unwieldy Imperial host was held up in inglorious inactivity by an ineffectual investment of Ghent. In August the correctness of d'Esquerdes' conjecture was confirmed by the action of the German rulers, who one after another began to recall their men; in October the Emperor himself turned homewards; and not long afterwards he was followed by Maximilian, who abandoned

[1] 'Ung pain d'un denier leur coste trois solz': La Trémoille, *Correspondence de Charles VIII*, p. 157.

a conflict as interminable as it was unfortunate, to safeguard his threatened interests in a more distant theatre of strife.

Utter desolation and a misery beyond description or belief appeared to be the sole outcome of these ineffectual efforts. Divided against themselves, invaded by the Germans from the north and by the French from the south, and plundered with impartial thoroughness by friend and foe alike, the Low Countries had endured in an extreme degree the sufferings which the conflict of dynastic and national ambitions has so often through the centuries called down upon a devoted land. 'Exalted by its successes and even by its reverses, each party met pillage with pillage, arson with arson, and murder with murder; and by their unrestrained indulgence in every sort of violence the undisciplined bands which France and Germany let loose upon our provinces added to the horrors of this war of extermination. No attention was paid to the safe-conducts of the merchants who ventured to confront the perils of the roads, and even religious establishments were not respected.'[1] In this competition in brutal violence the German adherents of Maximilian achieved an easy pre-eminence. 'Contrary to the said treaty and in breach thereof,' wrote Charles to Innocent VIII on the 2nd October, 'the said Maximilian has levied cruel war upon the said county of Flanders. The Emperor, his father, has been there in person, with the lieutenant and men of the Archbishop of Cologne and other German Princes, amounting in all to a great number of men of war. Having invaded our said country, people, and subjects, they have, as is reported, pillaged and plundered them, together with the churches and monasteries of that country, a great part whereof they have burnt and destroyed by fire, have forced and violated divers women, of whom some were nuns, and have killed and slain an infinite number of the people of the said country, without respect for the sanctity of places, or for age, or for sex.'[2] So wrote Charles,

[1] Henne et Wauters, *Histoire de la Ville de Bruxelles*, vol. i, p. 308, cited by Devillers, *Compte Rendu des Séances de la Commission Royale d'Histoire*, Fourth Series, vol. xv (Brussels, 1888), pp. 168–9.

[2] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier vol. ii, p. 254. Alain Bouchart tells us (*Grandes Croniques de Bretaigne*, fo. 242) that on the occasion of the capture of Arras 'divers Teutons and Germans fought in Maximilian's army, who pillaged without ceasing, because they had long been unpaid. After robbing and

indisposed, doubtless, to minimize the crimes of his opponents in his eagerness to convict the Pope of an unfortunate error in his selection of protégés. Not many years ago the indictment might have appeared to stand condemned by the vehemence of its asseveration; but to-day it seems less incredible to a generation with its own tragic experience of Teutonic savagery.

While these events had been in progress, the Low Countries had also been the theatre of another and less bloody contest. On the 21st July the King of the Romans made public, in the shape of a letter to the Estates of Hainault, an elaborate exposure of his objections to the whole aim and character of French policy. In August Charles' Government took up the challenge, and in concert with its Flemish allies composed a counter-manifesto for distribution in the Netherlands. A certain interest attaches to these documents [1] for the light they throw, if not on the real motives and objects of the belligerents, at least on what the world was expected to believe those motives and objects to be. How far the wordy warfare achieved any useful purpose is questionable, since it is not unreasonable to assume that those with sufficient intelligence to appreciate the niceties of the controversy had long ago taken sides. Before the 'povre peuple du plat pays' the jurist would certainly cast his dialectical pearls in vain; but however incapable of comprehending them, the luckless dwellers in Flemish villages must greatly have preferred his arguments to the more forcible ones upon which d'Esquerdes' *gens de*

despoiling the most well-to-do as being their enemies, they robbed the churches and sacred places, so that they seemed rather to have reduced the place to a desert than to have recovered it for Maximilian'. Another chronicler declares that the 'pillerie et robberye que ilz avoient fait en Arras et Artoys depuis leur venue . . . pooit monter à quatre cens mille escus et plus': Robert, *Journal*, pp. 144–5. Speaking of the hostility with which Maximilian was regarded in the Low Countries, a modern Dutch historian says: 'vooral richtte de haat der bevolking zich tegen de duitsche landsknechten des Roomschen Konings, die in Henegouwen en Vlaanderen, in Brabant en Namen op vreeselijke wijze hadden huisgehouden en meer de landen zelve dan den vijand hadden geteisterd': P. J. Blok, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Volk*, vol. ii, pp. 295–6.

[1] Gachard, *Lettres Inédites de Maximilien*, pp. 111–17 and pp. 118–44. The summary in the text has been somewhat compressed by the omission of prolixities and redundancies.

guerre and Maximilian's *landsknechte* were accustomed to rely.

'As you are well aware,' wrote the King of the Romans to the Estates, 'our first coming to this country was in response to the unanimous request and most instant entreaty of the Estates. For the Duchess was at war with the French, who had already occupied the two Burgundies, Artois, Boulognais, Auxerrois, Mâconnais, Picardy, and the Somme towns, all of which belonged by right to the patrimony of the Duchess. Further, King Louis had also invaded Hainault. By reason of this we were no sooner come than we were obliged to don our armour and take the field, and we did it to such good purpose that King Louis, though the most powerful Prince in the whole world, gained no advantage over us unless it were by treason. On the contrary, we kicked him out of Hainault,[1] recaptured everything he had taken, deprived him of some of his own towns and fortresses, and gained victories over him on several occasions. And, what is more, we forcibly reduced Liége, conquered Guelders, Flanders, Utrecht, and a third part of Holland, which had all revolted in expectation of French aid and succour, and recovered the person of our son, whom the French, ancient enemies of the House of Burgundy, had been scheming to get into their power.

'After several years had passed in this fashion, our Estates advised us to make peace with King Louis, which we did, though it cost us more than a third of our consort's patrimony, and, in addition, the person of our dearly beloved daughter.[2] This treaty was solemnly sworn to under the signs and seals of the French. Neither we nor our Estates remembered that for a century past no French obligation or promise to the House of Burgundy had ever been observed; and since our coming here there have been seven or eight occasions upon which, even in time of peace, they have broken their faith.

'This peace the French might have been expected to

[1] 'Nous l'avons débouté hors de nostre dit pays de Haynnau': Gachard, *Lettres Inédites de Maximilien*, p. 112.

[2] Under the terms of the Treaty of Arras the Arch-Duchess Margaret was handed over to the French, to be educated by them as the future wife of Charles VIII.

observe, not so much because they had solemnly sworn to do so, as because it advantaged them much more than us. However, after the death of King Louis those who had control of the present King formed the project, in defiance of all their obligations, of driving us from what was left of our possessions; and they contrived to stir up Ghent and the rest of Flanders against us, sending d'Esquerdes with a large armed force to encourage them in their rebellion. They also attacked us by sea, plundering our ships, and availed themselves of our enforced absence in Germany to incite the people of Liége to revolt, to the great detriment of ourselves and our subjects.

'Accordingly, on our return from Germany we took the field against them, hoping thereby to secure a genuine peace, and also with a view to supporting certain Princes of that country, our friends and allies, whom the Government had expelled and was endeavouring utterly to destroy, because in pursuance of their plighted troth they had stood out against the wrongs daily committed against us, our son, and our kingdom. In the hope, then, of obtaining this peace we allowed Philip of Cleves to approach the French Government; but the negotiations on their side were a make-believe; for they wanted us to agree to terms worse than those we had accepted before, and offered no reparation for all the wrongs they had done us. But now that the King has thrown off the yoke of this Government, we hope to come to terms. Meanwhile, let not the Estates of Hainault be inveigled by Flemish influence into any private arrangement with a dangerous and insidious foe.'

In August Madame's Government replied to this manifesto. 'It is true', they said, 'that the Duke of Austria was invited to the Low Countries by the Estates, but every one knows how his marriage with the Duchess was arranged, and how from that day to this the very men to whom he owed that marriage have been the objects of his persecution. He was invited in the hope that he would bring men and money for the Duchess' defence; but he came empty-handed, and not a single penny has ever come from Germany. On the contrary, as the official accounts show, enormous sums of cash have been poured away into the hands of the Duke and his German associates.

'He says that his first act on his arrival was to take up arms in defence of the Duchess' possessions. But in fact his first idea was to establish himself in them; and taking the unprecedented step of appropriating the Ducal insignia, he posed, not as his wife's consort, but as the hereditary lord and master of her dominions. In like manner since her death he has in contempt of tradition declined to accept the position of guardian to his son. His German confederates have even declared that there is no right of female succession in Duke Charles' Imperial fiefs, and that their master has been invested with these fiefs anew by the Emperor, his father.

'Next, as to his claim that the districts occupied by King Louis belonged of right to his wife. Picardy and the Somme towns had by the Treaty of Arras of 1435 been mortgaged to Duke Philip for 400,000 *écus*, and King Louis had already redeemed them. The same treaty provided that Péronne, Montdidier, and Roye should descend in the male line only. The County of Boulogne was the property of the La Tour family, and King Louis had acquired their rights by exchange. The Counties of Artois, Burgundy, Mâcon, and Auxerre have passed to the King and Queen;[1] they form the Queen's portion of her mother's inheritance, and by the Treaty of Arras of 1482 the Duke, his son, and all his subjects solemnly renounced all claims upon them. As regards the Duchy of Burgundy, any right to this which Philip may possess has been left unaffected by the Peace: let him therefore pursue his remedy in the courts.

'Maximilian says that King Louis never scored a success against him except by treachery. If cleverly contrived *coups* against him and his strong places are to be styled "treachery", it may be asked by what name he would call

[1] That is, to Margaret of Burgundy, who, as the affianced bride of Charles VIII, is invariably styled 'la Royne' in contemporary documents. It will be noticed that the French apology evades Maximilian's real point: the question was, not whether the Treaty of Arras had assigned these provinces to France, but whether Louis XI could show any justification for his previous seizure of them. It will be seen from what follows that the French base their case entirely on the treaty. They do not allege that Louis had a legal right to the territories in dispute, or even that there was a previous *status quo* which the treaty had to recognize. Their case is that the provinces were handed over by the treaty as the dowry of the bride, having been assigned to her in satisfaction of her just claim to a share in her mother's inheritance.

his own surprise of Thérouanne and his abortive attempts on Saint-Quentin, Hesdin, Béthune, and Saint-Pol. The inference seems to be that every success achieved by the Duke of Austria or his captains is a splendid feat of arms, but that it is a case of "treachery" when, as generally happens, they fail, or the plot is at their expense. Could any defence be more unreasonable or absurd?

'Then as to his other boastings. He says that he turned King Louis out of Hainault. Everybody knows that certain towns were restored under the terms of the truce of June, 1478, but not one did he ever recover by his own might. And wonderful, truly, was his prowess in Guelders, Flanders, Utrecht, and Holland, countries of poor and unarmed peasants, conquered by their own dissensions rather than by any action of his. He claims to have recovered possession of his son's person; and that is true: but he has ruined him in the process, whereas the Estates would have made him rich and prosperous. That the French wanted to get hold of the young Prince is no more true than that they are ancient enemies of Burgundy; never was there a greater lie, and it shows an astounding ignorance of their history on the part of the Duke's Burgundian councillors, by whom it was suggested. From the time of Saint Louis down to that of Montlhéry France and Burgundy were the best of friends. That they ceased to be so was the fault of Duke Charles and his Montlhéry expedition; and it is to this Duke's history, a history of war and suffering, that attention is directed by way of edifying the young Philip![1]

'Then the Duke goes on to complain that he was forced by his Estates into a disastrous treaty. The assertion is

[1] The historical aspect of the question is discussed in the letter at some length from the French point of view. For the sake of brevity I have omitted this argument, but there is one passage to which attention may be called. In the time of Charles VII and Philip of Burgundy, it is said, 'estoit si seure paix que l'on povoit aller, du boult du royaulme jusques au boult des pays dudict duc Phelippe, les mains plaines d'or et d'argent, sans trouver homme qui eût dit ne mal fait. Et dura ce temps, sans aucune interruption, depuis ledit an XXXV jusques à l'an LXV, où sont XXX ans': Gachard, *Lettres Inédites de Maximilien*, p. 125. The language recalls the passage in which the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle sums up the career of the first English Henry: 'A good man he was, and there was great awe of him. No man durst misdo against another in his time. He made peace for man and beast. Whoso bare his burden of gold and silver, no man durst say to him aught but good'.

neither complimentary to the Estates nor exact. It may be that the Estates pointed out the urgent necessity of peace; but so did the knights of the Golden Fleece, whom he consulted; and the treaty was solemnly sworn to by him and his advisers, not in the name of the Estates, but of their own free will. Neither was the peace disastrous; it cost him nothing, since nothing was his; and as for Duke Philip's inheritance, the treaty made a provision for his sister's *legitim* much more favourable to him than a partition of each of his mother's possessions. And in any case it is no good crying over spilt milk.[1]

'It has been suggested that the daughters of great Houses are wont to be dowered, not with lands, but with money. The answer to this is that parents in their lifetime can make up a daughter's portion out of real or personal property precisely as they please; but when the inheritance has come into possession, the daughter cannot be forced to accept payment in cash against her will,[2] and the annals of the House of Burgundy contain numerous instances where daughters' dowries were composed of lands. The Queen's dowry is worth a bare 40,000 francs a year, no great matter in comparison with the vast territories left to Duke Philip, and in return for it the King has abandoned a valuable asset in his claims to Douay, Orchies, and Lille. So far, indeed, is the treaty from being disadvantageous to Maximilian, as he alleges, that it appears upon the most cursory inspection to contain twenty articles in favour of Duke Philip and his subjects for every article in favour of France. Moreover, his daughter has been raised by her marriage to the French throne, the most exalted of human stations.

[1] 'Pour ce que pain cuist ne peult-on represtir, se seroit paine perdue, et s'en passe-l'en à tant': Gachard, p. 127. The expression is best rendered by a homely English equivalent.

[2] The argument, even if sound in law, was rendered absurd by the facts, for at the time of the Treaty of Arras Margaret was little more than a baby. The notion that she could have imposed upon the Burgundian Government a claim to territorial compensation is an evident absurdity, and the picture of Margaret 'not happy till she gets it' would furnish a modern cartoonist with an obvious opportunity. The fact was that Maximilian had never liked the treaty, which had been forced on him partly by the successes of Louis and partly by his own lack of resources and dubious position in the Low Countries.

'He taxes the French with bad faith, and declares that they have systematically broken their word to Burgundy for a century past. During the five hundred years when Burgundy was the loyal and obedient servant of the French Crown, there were no treaties to observe. It will be an ill day for France when her King enjoys as evil a name for perfidy as the Duke of Austria has earned by his recent exploits. He tried to stop his daughter being handed over to M. de Beaujeu in pursuance of the treaty, and then he arrested the deputies of Louvain, Brussels, and Antwerp, by whom the treaty had been promoted. It was in consequence of this, and not, as he alleges, of French intrigues, that the Flemings thought it time that their country should be governed by Duke Philip's advisers and by the Estates in the name of their own sovereign. When King Louis died, an attempt was made to incite Flanders to a breach of the peace. Then, as he now avows, he induced Lancelot de Berlamont to lie in wait for the ambassadors duly accredited by Flanders to the new King. Perhaps that may account for the outbreak of war between Flanders and himself.

'In the hope of avoiding this war the Flemings offered to refer the whole dispute to the King and his Parlement at Paris, a course for which there were good precedents, and steps to this end were actually taken. The Duke of Austria, however, disliked the proposal, and in course of time contrived a treacherous seizure of the towns of Tenremonde and Audenarde. In this state of affairs it became the business of the King, as sovereign lord of Flanders, to protect it from the *voye de fait*, and on the demand of the Flemings for protection against violence and robbery he sent troops to their succour. He hoped also to promote peace between the Duke and the Flemings, and terms were on the point of being arranged between d'Esquerdes and the Chancellor of Brabant when the troubles at Ghent supervened. As regards Liége, it has long been the ally of the French Crown, and has repeatedly been so described in treaties, so that even if the King had supplied it with men and money, which in fact he did not do, it would have involved no infraction of the Peace. It was the Duke who broke the Peace. It was he who began hostilities by sea,

and on land surprised Thérouanne, Mortaigne, and Honnecourt, and made an attempt on Saint-Quentin. It was then time for the King to defend himself. The capture of Saint-Omer, the recapture of Thérouanne, and the battle of Béthune were his answer. The King, however, as he and d'Esquerdes have often publicly declared, is always willing to restore the Peace; and if Duke Philip's countries have war, it is by their and his choice. The King and his advisers have received provocation enough, but they have never put up their price,[1] or demanded anything but the observance of the Treaty of Arras. It was for this that they asked before ever a French soldier set foot in Flanders, and it is for this that they ask now.

'Then Maximilian says that he took up arms to protect certain French Princes, his allies. The present situation of the rebels who relied on his help does not seem to give ground for legitimate pride. He thinks, no doubt, that French Princes resemble the Germans, who hurl defiance at the Emperor every day of their lives for no better reason than that he has wished them 'good-day' a bit too soon or a bit too late, and ten times in a year quarrel with him and make it up again. But he is altogether out in his reckoning, for French Princes by their nature, position, and mode of life are much too submissive and indebted to the Crown to make a mockery of their sovereign after the German fashion. The reason is simple. Of the great lords in the kingdom the least considerable receives from the King in a year greater favours in the shape of appointments, salaries, and pensions than ten of the Emperor's lords would get out of him between them.

'Then he affects to believe that the King has only recently become his own master. Since he acceded upon the death of his father, by genuine and legitimate succession and not by election,[2] the King has never been less his own master than he is to-day.

'Reverting again to what he calls the notorious bad faith of the French, it may be remarked that he accuses the French of breaking their word on six occasions, but gives no particulars, so that no answer is possible. That he

[1] 'N'ont jamais renchéri le marchié': Gachard, p. 137.

[2] A sly dig at the elected King of the Romans.

himself is no such scrupulous observer of an oath may be proved by what has occurred since the Peace of Arras was made. And like master, like man. Be a man ever such a blackguard, be he a perjurer, a robber, a past-master in intrigue, trickery, and deceit, still he will be welcome in that Household, a Liberty Hall without law or order, where every man is expected to live by his wits. The authors of Maximilian's letter might have done well to ponder the domestic situation before hurling false accusations at the French. War is meat and drink to the Duke's servants. May the Estates remember this when they come to consider the sincerity of the Duke's peaceable professions. To those Estates a last word may be spoken. Which do they prefer—war and suffering, as in the times since Montlhéry, or peace and prosperity, as in the days of good Duke Philip, who was the ally of France ? '

VII

THE BRETON MARRIAGE

The triple alliance, formed with the object of defending Brittany, found scanty encouragement in the conditions which prevailed in that distracted province after the disaster of Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier. The treaty of Le Verger, or Sablé, though it might seem to have been a blessing unexpectedly snatched from the imprudent generosity of Charles VIII, had done no more than provide a respite, precious indeed, but transient. Whilst removing no existing difficulties, it had in some directions created new ones. Under the terms of Francis II's will his daughters were placed under the guardianship of Marshal de Rieux and Madame de Laval; but the treaty had assigned the wardship to the King of France. The treaty empowered Charles to require the dismissal of every foreign auxiliary who had landed in Brittany; but so long as the army of France remained in being, prepared and menacing, the Bretons could not part with these auxiliaries without jeopardizing the safety of the province. If in these respects the treaty was unsatisfactory to the Government of Brittany, there were features which made it unpalatable to the Government of France. It left unsettled the question of the Breton succession, which was as vital as it had ever been, and had been rendered a hundred times more urgent by the death of Francis II. It stipulated that the Duke's daughters should contract no matrimonial alliances without the consent of Charles VIII, and provided certain penalties for a breach of that undertaking; but it contained no real sanctions for the protection of French interests, and if Anne of Brittany were to marry a powerful prince, France might in a moment be deprived of every advantage which compensated her for her exertions and rewarded her achievement.

In September, when the ink was scarcely dry on the treaty of Le Verger, a French embassy was sent to Brittany, to indicate the precautions which Madame thought it expedient to seek for the prevention of its rupture. The

envoys were instructed to demand a recognition of the King's right of wardship of the two Breton Princesses, together with the administration of the Duchy during their minority; the submission to arbitration of their and his rival claims; an abstention meanwhile from any endeavour to enforce the young Duchess' title; and the expulsion of all foreign troops, as promised in the treaty. To these pretensions the Bretons replied that, whilst ready to abide by the compact which they had made, they were not prepared to entertain any proposals for its modification.

The French demands caused anxiety in Brittany: the Breton resistance aroused suspicion in France. It seemed after all as though Madame had been right in her advocacy of thoroughness, and the King and his Chancellor wrong in their display of magnanimity. Sooner or later the Breton problem must be solved, and a prompt pursuit of recent success would best ensure that the solution should be in conformity with French interests. The French army was therefore reinforced, and a friendly interest was manifested in the doings of the Vicomte de Rohan, who was conducting military operations in Brittany, ostensibly in his own behalf. Rohan, who had married a daughter of Duke Francis I, claimed the Duchy in his wife's right, and hoped to eliminate the most formidable rival claim by marrying his two sons to the co-heiresses of Francis II.[1] The French Government told him that his project would receive the sanction of the suzerain, provided that that suzerain did not himself decide to marry the heiress. They were so far sincere that Rohan's success would be less detrimental to their interests than a marriage of the Duchess with Maximilian or with d'Albret or with a nominee of England or of Spain. Madame's true intention, however, was to use the Viscount as the sacrificial pawn in a gambit which offered the prospect of advantageous attack at a moment of her own choosing.

In the last days of the year Rohan and his brother, the Sire de Quintin, began operations with a body of troops strengthened by reinforcements which Charles had lent them for the purpose of expelling the foreign contingents. Near Pontrieux they encountered and defeated a body of

[1] See Genealogical Table II: Dukes of Brittany.

Breton gentlemen who were on their way to join the Duchess. They then attacked and sacked Pontrieux and Châteaulin-sur-Trieux, capturing a considerable booty and inflicting a serious loss upon Guingamp, to which Châteaulin served as an entrepôt for maritime trade. Guingamp, which had rejected their advances three months before, next became the object of their attentions. Though the captain of the place was absent, his lieutenant ill, and the chance of relief remote, the garrison bade Rohan defiance, proudly telling him that they were minded to do their duty so long as there was a Duke or a Duchess in Brittany. Despite their spirit, however, they were unequal numerically to the task of defence ; the initial fighting in the suburbs went against them (9–12 January) ; they understood that Morlaix and the whole country round them was in the power of the enemy ; and they concluded that, as their town could not be held indefinitely, it would be best to surrender it upon terms which would preserve the garrison for other service in the Breton cause. To the unconditional surrender demanded by Rohan and his French colleagues they refused to agree ; but they undertook that, if they were permitted to evacuate the place, Guingamp should be surrendered forthwith, and should pay an indemnity of 10,000 *écus* (22 January). Immediately afterwards Concarneau and Le Conquet opened their gates to Rohan, and in February the tale of his successes was completed by the seizure of Brest, which was not only a rich commercial centre and a mainstay of the maritime power of the Bretons, but by virtue of its splendid harbour was also the chief channel of their communication with the outside world and the most practicable avenue of approach for external aid.

Concurrently with these events the French Court moved to Touraine, a course which was always adopted when Breton affairs were in a critical state, and clearly indicated the persistence of an acquisitive ambition. At the same time the pretence that Rohan was playing for his own hand was quietly dropped, much to the chagrin of that aspiring miscreant, whose appetite had been whetted by a taste of success, and who did not at all relish the blunt intimation of the French Council that he must henceforth carry on as the instrument of Royal policy. But if the dropping of the

mask was annoying to Rohan, it was a much more serious matter for Brittany. When the Bretons protested against the use which had been made of French troops in breach of Charles' treaty obligations, Charles replied by a statement of his own grievances: the foreign auxiliaries were still in the country; new contingents from Spain and England had been admitted; and Breton bands had crossed the border, to go marauding in the King's territories.

Without the foreign aid which the triple alliance was being organized to supply, Brittany would be in no condition to resist renewed French aggression. For a long while unfavourable, her plight had become desperate; the humiliation of defeat had been added to the growing exhaustion of a protracted conflict, a child had succeeded to the throne, and whatever energy that child's advisers might have been able to devote to her service was paralysed by the bitter quarrels which divided them against themselves. As in the days before Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier, so again now the all-important question of the heiress' marriage was quickening every sort of greed and embittering every rivalry. With the passage of time the number of suitors had grown, and the difficulty of choosing among them had increased. Circumstances had, indeed, eliminated the Duke of Orleans, for Dunois' continued support of his candidature could not counteract the drawback of his capture and imprisonment. But his other rivals, Maximilian, d'Albret, and Rohan, were still in the field, and to them had been added the Duke of Buckingham, who was supported by Henry VII, Don Juan, who was put forward by Ferdinand the Catholic, and the King of France, who had begun to perceive that a marriage with the heiress might be the surest and simplest means of acquiring the inheritance. The situation would have been embarrassing for the Duchess and her advisers, even if they had been able to see eye to eye; and in fact they were at loggerheads. Rieux, who was clever, ambitious, patriotic according to his lights, and obstinately tenacious of his own opinions, desired that his ward should confer the coveted prize upon d'Albret. He understood that the candidatures of Don Juan and the Duke of Buckingham had been undertaken, not so much with a view to actual success, as to provide the Spanish and

English sovereigns with a likely means of defeating French pretensions; and, indeed, each of those sovereigns had indicated that he would abandon the support of his protégé, if a match acceptable to himself were to be arranged. With the French proposals Rieux would have nothing to do; a marriage with Charles would amount to a surrender of Breton independence, and as for Rohan, the Marshal regarded him, not only as a mere puppet of the King of France, but also as a traitor to the Breton cause. For him, therefore, the choice lay between d'Albret and Maximilian, and he regarded a marriage with Maximilian as a highly speculative transaction; the King of the Romans was a long way off, occupied with his own affairs, and generally ill qualified to make an efficient protector of Breton interests; and yet at the same time it was just possible that he might not only rise to the height of his opportunity, but abuse it, as he had done in his first wife's dominions, and that in preferring the King of the Romans to the King of France Brittany might fall from the frying-pan of French annexation into the consuming fire of Austrian entanglements. The alliance with d'Albret threatened no such perils. Brittany had nothing to fear, and much to hope, from his championship. Were he to mount the Ducal throne, he would not dominate Breton politics, or selfishly drag the province an unwilling captive at the wheels of his own chariot; but by his power and feudal connexions he could render priceless assistance. Moreover, he had been lured to the country by specific guarantees, and he had to his credit the patient fidelity of many weary months devoted to the service of his promised bride,[1] the substantial contribution which he had made to her defence, and the sacrifices which he had undergone in her behalf.

There was some substance in this reasoning of Rieux's, but there was one fatal weakness in his position: the rooted antipathy of the Duchess for the candidate of his fancy was impervious to argument. Anne of Brittany at this time was a forward child of agreeable appearance and rapidly

1 'He has stayed in Brittany for three years', wrote Charles VIII in March 1490, 'hoping every day for the said marriage': see Cl. Simon, 'Alain d'Albret et la Succession de Bretagne', in *Congrès Scientifique de France*, 39th session, vol. ii (Pau, 1873), p. 270.

expanding mental powers. When Saint-Gelais saw her at her coronation, he found her 'fair and young and full of such grace that it was a pleasure to behold her'.[1] 'She was beautiful and charming,' says Brantôme,[2] 'as I have been told by old folk who knew her, and as appears from her portrait, which I have seen. . . . One leg was the least little bit shorter than the other, but the defect was scarcely perceptible, and did not at all detract from her beauty.' Zaccaria Contarini, the Venetian ambassador, when he saw her at the French Court some two years later, was impressed not so much by her physical charm as by the force of character which his shrewd eye detected within the fair and fragile form. 'The Queen', he said, 'is seventeen years old, small of stature, spare in person, and visibly lame in one leg, though she wears high-heeled shoes to conceal the deformity. Her colouring is dark, and she is good-looking enough. She is remarkably astute for her age, and what she has once set her mind on, she strives to obtain by any means and at any cost.'[3] With a decided view of what was due to an attractive maiden of exalted rank, and with a choice of brilliant matches before her, she had no intention of sacrificing splendour and happiness by wedding a middle-aged libertine, boorish in manners, morose in temper, and unprepossessing in appearance; and the Marshal who designed to force the match upon her was to discover in his ward a tenacity of purpose as inflexible as his own. Mere child though she was, a liberal education and a premature familiarity with life's more painful realities had induced in her a precocious development of mind and character. The trials of an unfortunate Court had not been permitted to interrupt her studies; besides French and Breton, she knew English, German, Latin, and a little Greek; and she had laid the foundations of the intelligent interest in art and letters which was to be her distinction in later and happier days. The development of her character at so

[1] Saint-Gelais, *Histoire de Louis XII* (ed. Th. Godefroy, Paris, 1622), p. 73.

[2] Brantôme, *Œuvres*, ed. L. Lalanne, vol. vii, p. 309.

[3] Albèri, *Le Relazione degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato durante il Secolo Decimosesto*, Series I, vol. iv, p. 16: 'brunetta e assai formosa di volto e per la età sua astutissima, di sorte che quello che si mette in animo, o con risi o con pianti, *omnino* lo vuole ottenere'.

young an age was even more remarkable than the expansion of her mind; and her personality, as it unfolded itself, showed a promise of strength and resolution unalloyed by any admixture of feminine tenderness or dependence. Proud, brave, and self-reliant, she was already cunning, self-willed, and unforgiving. She loved her country truly and well, but she loved it with something of the narrowness of provincial patriotism; and to follow such a line of conduct and policy as would preserve Breton independence and her own freedom of action had become with her an immutable resolve. She did not mean to marry d'Albret, and nobody should make her do so; if any promise had been given him, it had been extorted from her father's necessities or her own fears; and she would sooner go into a convent than submit at the dictation of her elderly mentor to a union which she abhorred.

It was impossible that a quarrel between such persons and in such a cause should remain confined to the principals. Lescun, the Countess of Laval, and some members of the higher nobility supported Rieux. The cause of the Duchess was espoused by Dunois, out of his lingering hopes for Orleans, by Philippe de Montauban, her Chancellor, out of his unselfish affection for his young mistress, and by the smaller gentry of the country, out of a chivalrous devotion to a damsel in distress. The quarrel soon deepened into a bitter feud, and in addition to all her other misfortunes Brittany had to endure the crowning calamity of rival Governments and rival parties contending fiercely for supremacy. Threatened by the French at Redon, the Duchess dared not withdraw to Nantes, because d'Albret commanded the place. She summoned Rieux and Lescun to her aid, but the order was issued by Montauban, and they would not obey it. She claimed the right to enter her capital as a sovereign, and Rieux refused her admission, attempting the while to revive popular prejudices by reiterating the old malicious story that her advisers were in the pay of France. And just as the gravity of Brittany's peril was unable to still the voice of contention at home, so the urgency of her need was insufficient to free her diplomacy from its baneful effects. In the very crisis of Breton fortunes the English and Spanish Courts were

permitted to behold the unedifying spectacle of a frenzied competition between the Governments of Nantes and Rennes, in which each seemed more eager to deprive its rival of assistance than to obtain help for itself. The chief object with Rieux was to enlist the support of Henry VII for the marriage with d'Albret, and his emissaries explained to that monarch how the suitor was not only capable of defending the integrity of Brittany, but by the situation of his great possessions in France was also well qualified to render invaluable assistance to England in the prosecution of her ambitions in Guyenne. The Duchess' envoys, on the other hand, declared that d'Albret was a fugitive without power or consideration, whose ability to help others might be gauged by his failure to protect his own possessions against forfeiture at the hands of Charles VIII ; and in any event, they said, the Duchess would sooner take the veil than espouse such a husband. Henry sided with Rieux. He did not yet know Anne of Brittany or the determination of which she was capable, and he did know Rieux, who once already had deserted to the French, and whose fragile fidelity he therefore thought it wiser to nurse. But at the same time he was alive to the suicidal folly of the Breton factions, and in his eagerness to heal their feuds begged the Duchess to show some mark of trust in the troops whom he had sent to her support. Anne sullenly refused. It was believed in her Court at Rennes that Rieux had hatched a plot with Henry for the capture of the Duchess by the English forces and her forcible marriage to d'Albret, in return for which service the Gascon seigneur was to co-operate with the English in the conquest of Guyenne. Meanwhile a few more German auxiliaries, sent by Maximilian, had landed at Roscoff, and a body of 2,000 Spaniards, the contribution of Ferdinand, had disembarked at Vannes. These contingents espoused the cause of the Duchess, and joined her at Rennes.

The first English detachments reached Guérande in March, and in April another contingent followed them. Just before the arrival of these troops the garrison which Rohan had left in Guingamp had made a sortie from the town and inflicted upon the local Breton forces a defeat which had caused them much irritation. The coming of

the English offered the prospect of revenge, and at the suggestion of a Breton captain King Henry's men came ashore at Pontrieux with a view to an attack on Guingamp. The garrison of the place was only 1,500 strong, and could not hope to make a successful defence: it therefore beat a retreat, after committing further pillage and arson upon the city, which already it had partially robbed and burned. It was not only in Guingamp that the arrival of considerable English forces aroused apprehension. All the French captains were seriously perturbed, and urgent representations were made to the Council of the need for more men, more money, and more guns. Henry VII wrote[1] in high spirits to Lord Oxford. As soon as they got news of the landing of our army, he said, the French abandoned Guingamp, and, as our army advanced, they also abandoned Moncontour, Chauson,[2] Hennebont, and Vannes, the garrisons fleeing and destroying the defences. In Brest and Concarneau also the French were straitly besieged and in great peril.

Concarneau capitulated after some resistance, and a like fate seemed to await the important town of Brest. Bent upon achieving a triumph which would place so bright a feather in his somewhat bedraggled cap, Rieux was moving heaven and earth to collect an army and to equip a fleet; and in June a Breton flotilla entered the roads. Though forty French 'lances' under Jean du Bellay had got through to the threatened city, its situation was nevertheless precarious, for the garrison, even with du Bellay's reinforcement, numbered no more than twelve hundred men, its equipment was poor, and there were constant difficulties about supplies. Urged by the King to hold out, and cheered by the promise of assistance, the garrison resisted doggedly, and at last the assistance came. In August Graville entered the roads at the head of a fleet of twenty-five sail; and his arrival transformed the situation. The besiegers were in no condition to stand up against so formidable an addition to the armed might of their enemy,

[1] *Paston Letters*, ed. James Gairdner (new edit., London, 1900), vol. iii, pp. 357–8.

[2] La Tour de Cesson, the stronghold which guarded the approaches to Saint-Brieuc.

for their ships were dilapidated by long service afloat, and their land forces had been weakened by numerous desertions among the gentlemen, who had gone off to protect their homes against the activities of French foragers and marauders. At sight of Graville the Breton ships took to flight, and on shore Rieux retired precipitately, leaving his artillery to fall into the hands of the enemy. For the time at least, Brest was safe.

Meanwhile the situation of the Duchess had grown more deplorable than ever. French troops were harrying and wasting the country right up to the gates of Rennes; the city, already crowded by the precautionary demolition of its suburbs, had been invaded by a host of fugitive peasants from the adjoining districts; and epidemic illness was raging in its congested and insanitary streets. In desperate straits for money, despite her sales of personal jewels and patrimonial estates, the Duchess found an increasing difficulty in satisfying the demands of her foreign auxiliaries. The ill-paid Germans were venting their resentment in mutiny and pillage. The English, under similar treatment, grumbled because they were not paid more regularly, fed more generously, and lodged more comfortably; whilst the Duchess complained bitterly that, if only they had co-operated loyally in its defence, the province might long ago have been cleared of French troops.

It will be thought strange that Madame, usually so keen to detect, and so quick to seize, an opportunity, should have allowed the tiresome and dangerous affair of Brittany to drag on without venturing the small exertion that to all appearances must have sufficed to finish it off. The little country, though still struggling painfully to defend its independence, was exhausted by prolonged warfare, drained by oft repeated taxation, desolated by predatory invaders; rival factions divided its energies and dissipated its resources; and the foreign soldiers who had been sent to its aid were little less of an affliction than the enemy whom they were designed to hold at bay. To sweep away the feeble resistance of which alone Brittany was capable was well within the military power of France, and Madame's Government had made the necessary preparations. The ban and reban had been called out in Normandy, Maine, Anjou, and

Poitou; 800 'lances' and 14,000 foot were being made ready to take the field; Graville was organizing fleets in the harbours of Normandy and Guyenne; and French diplomacy was at work to enlist the co-operation of a Danish squadron of five-and-twenty sail. From a military point of view the problem was easy of solution.

In the political situation, however, there were features to which, in Madame's judgement, an attentive regard must be paid. She had to guard against two great dangers. The one was the risk of pushing Brittany to an extremity, and driving its Duchess into some marriage alliance which would spell irretrievable failure for the designs which France cherished. The other was the apprehension lest too clear a revelation of French intentions should bring to a sensible heat the hitherto tepid enthusiasm of the triple alliance. The formation of the coalition was of itself a proof of the fear with which France was regarded by her neighbours, and, if she were to spur them to a real activity, she might presently find herself fighting, not for the purpose of making new conquests, but to repel invasion and to resist dismemberment. Reluctant though he had been to enter the war, the King of England was warming to his work, and besides sending troops to Brittany he had suddenly and stealthily made an intervention in Flanders which had enabled the supporters of Maximilian to inflict a serious defeat upon d'Esquerdes' forces, relieve Dixmude, and save West Flanders. In the loss of Saint-Omer the French had experienced yet another blow. Maximilian, too, was known to be preparing for further exertions; Franche-Comté had been attacked, and the Duchy of Burgundy was threatened; and for the purpose of organizing measures against the French the rulers of Germany were being summoned to a Diet in which, as Madame knew, the prevalent opinion would favour a French war. Confronted by this situation, Madame had preferred diplomacy to a recourse to violence. Her object was to leave the field clear by effecting the break-up of the coalition. The confederacy, as she was aware, was based upon no principle, and was held together by no stouter bonds than selfish fear and still more selfish greed. Roussillon and Cerdagne were names with which to conjure at the Court of the Catholic

sovereigns; Henry VII would not scrutinize too closely any proposal which offered the prospect of pecuniary advantage; and anything might be anticipated from the inconsequence of the shifty and inconstant Maximilian. The problem for Madame was not so much to achieve her object as to achieve it without paying too large a price.

Having once decided upon her policy, Madame set about the execution of it with characteristic astuteness. The Archbishop of Sens was sent to England to explain to Henry that, if hostilities were being continued in Brittany, the fault did not lie with the King of France; he had made a treaty with the Bretons, of which he earnestly desired the observance; but the Bretons had wilfully broken it. The stories about French designs on that country were malicious inventions, and the whole trouble was of the Bretons' own choosing, for they had harboured Charles' domestic rebels, and if he had objected to such conduct, it was not for a brother sovereign to blame him. Leaving these explanations to produce what effect they might, Madame then turned to Brittany itself, and sent to the Duchess an envoy whom she was bound to welcome. The Prince of Orange, who had been taken at Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier, had lately been set free at the solicitation of his wife, who was Madame's sister-in-law; and he was now dispatched to Rennes, to foment the existing discord between the Duchess' advisers, and generally to further French interests. A clever use was also made of that jealousy of foreigners which was a sentiment never much below the surface in Breton breasts. The presence of large English forces, their occupation of Breton strongholds, their apathy in the Breton cause, and their avarice and discontent had excited a suspicion that the true object of their intervention was to effect a permanent settlement in the country. Upon this suspicion Madame adroitly played. She enlarged upon the likelihood of England casting covetous eyes upon the Breton sea-board, and declared that the King of France might long ago have bought off English opposition but for his determination that not one yard of Breton soil should be sacrificed to their greed. 'As for the nobles and people of Cornouaille not liking the action of the Marshal de Rieux in putting the English in Concarneau, we believe that every intelligent

person has cause to be vexed at it, for it involves the entire undoing of the country, as you well know. You, and they too, must understand the ends which the English pursue, and the reports which they spread. If we were to be cajoled into agreeing to leave them the sea-coast places, they would immediately want a peace with us, which we would on no account accept.' [1]

In the same way that Orange was utilized in one quarter the Count of Nassau, who had been captured at Béthune, was turned to account in another, and after being let off the payment of half his ransom, was dispatched to the Court of the King of the Romans. On the summoning of the German Diet a formal embassy followed in Nassau's footsteps. It was here that Madame meant to make the real bid for the severance of the hostile alliance, and her envoys were to propose that, if the King of the Romans would throw over his confederates, the King of France would assist him to re-establish his authority in insurgent Flanders. The overtures were favourably received by Maximilian, and on the 22nd July peace was signed at Frankfort.

By this treaty the contracting sovereigns undertook to pardon their rebel subjects: Philip of Cleves and his adherents in the Low Countries were to be forgiven by Maximilian, and Charles was to restore their forfeited possessions to Dunois and d'Albret. Charles promised that he would use his influence with the Flemish communes to bring them back under the authority of Maximilian. He agreed that the question of the title to the Breton throne should be submitted to arbitration, and that pending the award Saint-Malo, Dinan, Fougères, and Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier should be put in neutrality in the hands of Beaujeu and Orange, provided that Anne of Brittany would first secure the evacuation of the country by the English. Other outstanding questions, such as the liberation of the Duke of Orleans, claimed by Maximilian, and the retrocession of Saint-Omer, demanded by the French, were adjourned for further discussion at a future meeting of the two sovereigns, which, it was agreed, should take place within a period of three months.

Despite some appearances to the contrary, the treaty of

[1] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, vol. ii, p. 361.

Frankfort was a success for Anne de Beaujeu's diplomacy. It was true that France seemed to desert her Flemish allies, and to recognize in the King of the Romans a title to pose as the official champion of Brittany. But Charles had promised merely to persuade the Flemings, not to compel them; and it was fairly safe to assume that, whatever their discouragement at the French desertion,[1] it would require some force more potent than persuasion to compel the rebels to a reconciliation with Maximilian. The undertaking to abandon the French conquests in Brittany was in substance as illusory. France was to release her grip upon the condition that the English relaxed theirs; the English would not stir until they were indemnified for their expenses; and Brittany was wholly unable to meet the English bill. Meanwhile the treaty with its specious air of concession had detached Austria from England and Spain. It had also removed the danger of an intervention by the Empire in Maximilian's quarrel; and without the Empire at his back the King of the Romans was not greatly to be feared.

I do not propose to inflict upon the reader in all its wearisome detail the story of the negotiations, often hollow and always intricate, between England, Brittany, Austria, Spain, and France which followed upon the treaty of Frankfort. The objects of French diplomacy remained much what they had been, namely, to paralyse the hostile coalition, and so to leave the field clear in Brittany. These objects now began to receive support from Innocent VIII, who encouraged the pacific inclinations of the French, not so much because the spiritual head of Christendom was grieved by a bloody strife among his erring children, as because in a little quarrel of his own with the King of Naples he might gain a useful ally, if a settlement of Breton affairs should leave Charles at leisure to take up the question

[1] By his arbitral sentence pronounced at Montils-lez-Tours on the 30th October 1489 the King of France restored the Regency to Maximilian, and condemned Bruges, Ypres, and Ghent in a fine of 300,000 *écus*, or 525,000 *livres tournois*. In its ultimate effects the policy pursued by Madame at Frankfort turned out to be unsatisfactory, for her desertion of the communes undoubtedly weakened their resistance, and paved the way for the pacification of the Low Countries which Maximilian was able to effect two years later. In the meantime, however, France secured her great object, the annexation of Brittany.

of his Angevin inheritance. The Duchess of Brittany was with difficulty persuaded to accede to the arrangements which had been made at Frankfort, but nothing came of the ensuing conferences. The King of England was as obdurate, and the meetings with his representatives were as sterile.[1] Henry objected to an abandonment of Brittany, and he objected quite as strongly to an unprofitable peace; he desired to steer a middle course between a serious war, which would make a lucrative arrangement impossible, and a tame surrender unaccompanied by pecuniary gain. He had also to consider the bellicose temper of his subjects and the susceptibilities of his Spanish ally. Ferdinand and Isabella, alarmed by the Treaty of Frankfort, were gravely concerned at the prospect of a further check to their designs in the shape of a *rapprochement* between England and France; they viewed with lively displeasure the meddlesome interference of the Pope in international affairs; and they instructed their ambassador at the Papal Court to expostulate with Innocent VIII with whatever vehemence he might think appropriate to the occasion. Their apprehension was that, if the King of England were to follow the bad example of the King of the Romans, not only would France annex Brittany, but Spain would also lose her best chance of recovering Roussillon and Cerdagne. Thinking it as well, however, to be prepared for every eventuality, they set to work to forestall their ally by initiating secret negotiations with the enemy. The hand of a Spanish Infanta was once more pressed upon Charles, who was told that in becoming their son-in-law he would ensure their desertion of Brittany, where he might then do as he pleased.

The Spanish monarchs assumed that the fate of Brittany would depend upon their fiat, but in fact the province stood upon the threshold of events which were to work a fresh metamorphosis in its chequered fortunes. The Treaty of

[1] The fault was not entirely Henry's, for the French seem either to have desired, or at all events to have expected, no result from the negotiations. In announcing to the Pope the postponement of one of the congresses, Flores told him that it was to be held at the same place on the feast of Saint Michael, but added that he had it from the Chancellor of France that no one would appear there for the King of France: *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, vol. i, p. 198.

Frankfort had produced no material change in Franco-Breton relations. Not only did the English refuse to quit the province, thereby releasing Charles from his contractual obligations, but Marshal de Rieux also supplied him with a further excuse for evasion by continuing to levy war. The French were not likely to evacuate their bases, and could not be blamed for retaining them, when Rieux was taking English contingents into his service, raising troops of his own, and grasping every occasion that offered to go ravaging in Maine, Anjou, and Poitou. With a fine impartiality the Marshal also attacked the Duchess' German auxiliaries, besieged her Chancellor, held her adherents to ransom, and appropriated her regalia. But at last his country was beginning to tire of his factiousness, and in the summer of 1490 the evidences of his declining authority accumulated so fast that he determined to sell his submission while it was still worth purchase. The bargain was costly for the Duchess, for the Marshal and his confederates, d'Albret and the Countess of Laval, received the promise of indemnities equivalent to some two million pounds sterling in modern money; but the boon of unity was of inestimable value, and the Duchess was right in judging that no sacrifice was too great to secure it.

Thus Rieux again stood ready to take up arms in the Duchess' defence, and before the year was over another renegade Paladin re-embraced the faith which he had abjured. At Frankfort Maximilian had in effect deserted Anne of Brittany, though he had veiled the desertion under an appearance of solicitude for the Breton cause; and at Ulm in July he had signed a new agreement with France which seemed to prove his desire to cement his new friendship. But the alliance with France had really been commended only by the passing difficulties of the moment; enduring causes of jealousy and friction must prevent its ripening into a genuine union; and ere long the King of the Romans began to gravitate once more into the orbit of anti-French politics. Ferdinand and Henry were willing enough to welcome him back, and to negotiate a new alliance. An offensive and defensive treaty between Henry and Maximilian stipulated that the two monarchs should unite for the recovery of the possessions of which France had despoiled

them and for the protection of the injured heirs of the Burgundian and Breton rulers; and Ferdinand adhered to the treaty so far as related to the defence of the Archduke Philip and the Duchess Anne. By this compact the fruits of the diplomacy by which Madame had won the peace of Frankfort were destroyed entirely; and there was even worse to come. Maximilian was scudding forward before such a favouring breeze as rarely filled his sails. On the Danube he was on the way to the recovery of much of Austria and to the conquest of much of Hungary. In the Low Countries his forces were compelling the proud city of Bruges to a humiliating surrender. In Brittany he was about to win the hand to which so many suitors had aspired, and with it the inheritance which had been the object of so much ambition and the occasion of so much strife.

The counsellors of Anne of Brittany had at last been forced to the conclusion that a marriage with Maximilian offered the sole hope of salvation. The province had sunk to a pitch of misery which eclipsed its own tragic experience. At one and the same moment it suffered the evils of bankruptcy, anarchy, insurrection, and invasion. Such revenue as it contrived to produce was spent long before it was received, the Court lived on charity, and its officers subsisted by plunder. Pirates infested the coasts, and brigands patrolled the roads. Commerce had disappeared; the trader, to pursue his business, must run the gauntlet of the French forager, the local robber, and the unpaid and mutinous auxiliary; and a mixture of unusual pluck with abnormal greed would scarcely suffice to make a man imperil himself and his goods in so daring an adventure. The extremity was such as to compel a decision, and Rieux, forsaking d'Albret, concurred with the Duchess' other advisers that the best plan would be to confer upon the King of the Romans an official title to save the Duchy. Maximilian had been preferred by the late Duke, and was not objected to by Brittany's allies. He was ready to form the alliance, and the Duchess would not be averse from it, if convinced that the interest of her country demanded it. The proposal was favoured by the Estates which were convened to consider it, and they indicated the terms upon which it might be accepted. Maximilian was to undertake

that he would respect the liberties of the province, that he would impose no taxation without the consent of the Estates, that he would employ Bretons in the defence of Brittany, and that, so far as concerned its own participation, the Duchy should be the arbiter in questions of peace and war. If more than one child should be born of the contemplated union, the second should inherit the Duchy, and if no child should be born, Maximilian should have no claim upon the succession. These terms were accepted by Maximilian's representatives, and on the 6th December his handsome favourite, Wolfgang von Polheim, holding the Royal procuration, solemnly married Anne of Brittany in his master's name.

The marriage was accompanied by a bizarre ceremony which may best be described in the words of Bacon. 'The marriage was consummate by proxy with a ceremony at that time in these parts new. For she was not only publicly contracted, but stated as a bride, and solemnly bedded, and after she was laid, there came in Maximilian's ambassador with letters of procuration, and in the presence of sundry noble personages, men and women, put his leg (stript naked to the knee) between the espousal sheets, to the end that that ceremony might be thought to amount to a consummation and actual knowledge. This done, Maximilian, (whose property was to leave things then when they were almost come to perfection, and to end them by imagination; like ill archers, that draw not their arrows up to the head; and who might as easily have bedded the lady himself as to have made a play and disguise of it,) thinking now all assured, neglected for a time his further proceeding, and intended his wars.' [1]

Bacon is unduly severe in his strictures upon the Royal bridegroom. Maximilian was a long way off; the bride whom he had wedded was a child; he could not at once have come to her side either easily or safely or without detriment to other important interests; and his coming

[1] Bacon, 'Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh', in the *Works*, ed. J, Spedding, vol. vi, p. 101. When Maximilian had married Mary of Burgundy, 'the Duke of Bavaria, his representative, had entered the nuptial bed clad in steel from head to foot and separated from the Princess by a naked sword': Cl. Simon, *Alain d'Albret*, p. 259.

would have made it impossible to preserve the secrecy in which the marriage had been wrapped. It is true that in any event the secret was not likely to be kept for long, and that in France the truth was soon suspected, and then positively known. For Charles and his Council, von Polheim's grotesque comedy was an episode of almost tragic import. Where now was the fair vision which had beckoned them on through six strenuous and anxious years—the vision of the last independent province absorbed in the demesnes of the Crown, of the last feudal Court defeated and submissive, of France, at unity with herself, standing erect and triumphant in the face of a hostile world? 'The union of Brittany and Austria seemed, indeed, to be a disaster. Just as the Low Countries had eluded Louis XI by the marriage of Mary of Burgundy, so the marriage of Anne would snatch Brittany from Charles VIII. On all sides France would be hemmed in by Austrian possessions: in the north by Flanders, where the Treaty of Frankfort had just re-established Maximilian's influence; in the east by the two Burgundies, where Maximilian was working unceasingly on the feelings of sympathy still entertained for the old Princely House; in the west by the great Armorican peninsula.'[1]

There was still time by prompt and vigorous action to avert the disasters which threatened, to annul the half-completed marriage, and to complete the half-accomplished conquest. The largest force which France had yet mustered stood ready under her ablest generals, and even before Maximilian's dramatic *coup* the temptation to use it had conflicted with more prudent counsels. So long ago as the previous August the Papal Prothonotary had observed that 'the King's inclination to invade Brittany increases, since he perceives that the King of the Romans is a long way off, and attending to the affairs of Hungary, and that the King of Castile is intent upon the Moorish territory'.[2] Injury and affront had not lessened the inclination, and prudence itself was beginning to counsel its indulgence, when fortune sent the opportunity. There was one place where the marriage of the Duchess inspired a resentment more bitter

[1] Pélicier, *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu*, p. 175.
[2] *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, vol. i, p. 198.

even than that which it had provoked at the Court of the flouted suzerain, and that was in the Castle of Nantes, where in sullen dejection the jilted d'Albret nursed his wrongs. It was true that he had been a party to the compact by which the feud between the Duchess and Rieux had been ended, and that for valuable consideration he had renounced his claim to Anne's hand, being promised an indemnity of 100,000 *écus* payable in five years, an annual pension of 12,000 *livres*, the captaincy of a hundred 'lances', the hand of Anne's younger sister, Isabeau,[1] for his son, subject to the approval of Brittany's allies, and a second indemnity as large as the first, if this marriage should not take place. But he had submitted from necessity, not from choice; he regarded Anne's marriage with Maximilian as an act of treachery towards himself, for which no pecuniary compensation could make amends; and he felt a justifiable doubt whether the compensation which had been promised would ever be forthcoming. Thus indignation conspired with self-interest to throw him into the arms of France. Acquainting the Beaujeus with 'his desire to serve the King' in view of 'the deceptions practised upon him by those who had invited him to go to Brittany to marry Madame Anne upon the faith of promises which have been broken', he expressed his willingness 'to promise and undertake to hand over the town of Nantes to the King'.[2] He was to be granted in return a free pardon for all his offences against the Crown, the restitution of his forfeited estates, a company of a hundred 'lances', an annual pension of 20,000 *livres*, and a cash payment of 110,000 *écus*. These promises were as lavish as those made by the Duchess' advisers, and they were more likely to be observed.

As soon as the bargain had been struck, the Royal forces which were waiting upon the Angevin border advanced upon Nantes. Rieux, the captain of the place, was absent upon a hunting expedition; the French were introduced by d'Albret into the castle; and the great fortress which had defied the armed might of France passed without a blow into the King's hands (February 1491).

[1] Isabeau died on the 24th August 1490.

[2] Archives of the Basses-Pyrénées, cited by Dupuy, *Histoire de la Réunion de la Bretagne à la France*, vol. ii, p. 221.

The surrender of Nantes was as severe a shock to the cause of the coalition as had been the marriage of Maximilian to that of France; indeed, it surpassed it in importance, if judged by the test of immediate and practical effects. The news put the King of the Romans into a high dudgeon: it was not in the expectation of such developments as this that he had assumed the Ducal crown. He complained loudly to the assembled Diet, inveighing against the perfidy of the French, denouncing their treacherous capture of 'my town of Nantes', and declaring that he would as lief have lost his whole patrimony as have suffered this outrage at their hands. His auditors listened with sympathetic interest, and promised him a contingent of 12,000 *landsknechte* for use in Brittany, whilst his English ally undertook to add a reinforcement of 6,000 men. 'But the discord which supervened between these two Princes and the slowness of the Germans, whose steel is wondrous heavy and to be moved only by springs of gold, left the King at leisure to accomplish his purpose and supplant Maximilian.' [1]

The King of England entertained no deceptive hopes about the speed with which the promised aid of the Empire would take material shape in Brittany, and, whilst as anxious as ever that that country should be saved, he was no more eager than before to take the burden of its defence upon his own shoulders. Madame hoped that the situation might incline him to pacific counsels, and a French embassy crossed the Channel, to disarm his hostility, if that were possible, or at all events to fathom his intentions. Her aim seems to have been to put him off the scent by making out that Charles had become indifferent to Brittany under the influence of other interests. Reminding Henry of the services which France had rendered in far off, unhappy days, and assuring him that her King was still animated by the same sentiments of affection towards the ruler which he had displayed towards the fugitive exile, the ambassadors proclaimed that the great wish of Charles was for a sincere friendship with England. He intended to proceed to the conquest of Naples in virtue of his ancestral rights, and then to pass on to the chastisement of the Turks, the common

[1] Jean de Serre, cited by Pélicier, *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu*, p. 177.

enemies of all Christian princes. Henry would understand that Charles could not adventure his country in such an enterprise without some security that his subjects, the Flemings, would be protected against the aggressions of Maximilian, and his ward, the Duchess of Brittany, shielded from his machinations.

Replying by the mouth of his Chancellor, Morton, Henry answered that he could not but approve Charles' laudable project of fighting the Turks, but if it was to be a question of asserting ancestral rights, England might be tempted to take a hand in the game. If the King of France were to claim the kingdom of Naples in virtue of his hereditary title, he ought not to be surprised if the King of England were to reflect upon his own position ; no English sovereign could forget that Normandy, Poitou, and Guyenne were ancient possessions of his realm, or fail to remember that the French crown itself had been the subject of the just pretensions of his ancestors. England did not really desire to raise questions of this gravity, but she did want some satisfactory assurances touching French intentions, and it was asked specifically whether, in the event of Henry agreeing to an arrangement which would secure to Charles the right of disposing of the hand of Anne of Brittany, Charles would formally undertake not to marry her himself. As everybody knew that such a marriage had become the chief object of Charles' policy, the question was embarrassing for his envoys. They replied, adroitly enough, that the idea was so remote from the mind of their master that it had not occurred to him so much as to mention the matter, with the result that they were without instructions.[1]

If these negotiations left any doubt about the attitude of Henry VII, it was removed by his action in dispatching fresh troops to Brittany. It was plain that efforts at conciliation could nowhere achieve any result, and it was as clear that in one quarter everything was to be attained by a display of force. If Charles was to win his bride, he must rely upon a Sabine wooing, and such a courtship were best pressed forward with speed. Everything lay ready to his hand. Since the early spring he had been pressing for greater preparations for the conquest of Brittany ; the Council had

[1] Dupuy, *Histoire de la Réunion de la Bretagne à la France*, vol. ii, pp 224–5.

been considering measures for raising the combatant forces to 30,000 or 40,000 men; and Louis de la Trémoille had resumed the chief command. The martial instrument which had thus been got ready was now set in motion. Crossing the river Vilaine, La Trémoille recaptured Guingamp and Concarneau, revictualled the French positions in Lower Brittany, and then appeared before Rennes. His army was large, and was exceptionally well equipped with powerful artillery. Hopeless from the first, the situation of the Duchess soon became desperate. She was forsaken by her nobles, her allies, and her foreign troops, destitute of every means of resistance, bereft of all hope of succour. She might, perhaps, effect an escape, and Henry offered to send ships to bring her away; but she scorned to quit her post in the hour of danger and to abandon her country in the moment of defeat. But the only alternative to flight was a surrender upon terms to the French, and the only terms which the French would entertain were her marriage with the King and the union of her Duchy with the kingdom. Conditions so humiliating to her haughty spirit and so repugnant to her ardent patriotism she found it hard to accept. To preserve Breton independence, she had suffered much, and was ready to sacrifice all. To destroy that independence, Charles had inflicted years of bloodshed and misery upon her beloved land. How, then, could she consent, not merely to forgive him, but actually to take him to her bosom? And, besides, was she not the affianced bride of Maximilian, whilst Charles was the betrothed husband of Maximilian's child? And did not religion itself forbid the union?

It was for those who favoured the French match to dispel these doubts and to conquer this hesitation. Louis of Orleans, whom the King had released from captivity and sent to Rennes, was amongst those who stood at the Duchess' side. Orleans could no longer hope to win for himself a prize for which great kingdoms were at war; in the leisure of his long imprisonment at Bourges he had meditated upon the folly of his former rebellions; and, genuinely grateful for the boon of recovered freedom, he was animated by a real desire to further his benefactor's ends. He was supported by Dunois, who hoped by this tardy service to

regain the Royal favour, and by Orange, who saw that the cause of Maximilian was lost, and wished to undo for the benefit of the King of France what he had himself been instrumental in accomplishing for the benefit of others.[1] To the earnest solicitations of the French Princes were added the reasoned advice and the solemn warnings of Rieux and Montauban, who knew the impossibility of relief, saw the paramount need of peace, and assured the Duchess that the acceptance of a true union between Brittany and her victorious neighbour, which was 'the only means of putting her country at peace and her person at ease', would be, not a treason, but a service, to the Breton cause. Her Estates were convened, and seconded the recommendation: her confessor was summoned, and made light of her scruples.[2] The will of a girl, whatever her obstinacy, could scarcely resist so formidable a pressure, and perhaps in her inmost heart the Duchess was less averse from surrender than she seemed. If it was hard to pardon Charles for his aggression, it was not easy to forgive Maximilian for his neglect, or to forget that he had been an untrustworthy ally, a faint-hearted champion, a cold wooer, and a neglectful spouse. And if to reject Maximilian was to put aside an Imperial crown, yet to accept the hand of Charles was to mount a throne as great as any in the world.

When Charles was informed of Anne's altered disposition, he approached Rennes on the pretext of a pilgrimage, entered the city, and sought an interview with its mistress. Three days later the pair were secretly betrothed in the presence of Anne de Beaujeu and of her former enemies, Orleans, Orange, Dunois, and Montauban. Charles then withdrew to Langeais in Touraine, whither the Duchess followed him, and there on the 6th December in the great hall of the castle the heiress of Brittany, resplendently attired in a robe of cloth of gold embroidered with gold and trimmed with sable,[3] became the wife of the King of France.

[1] The phrase is d'Argentré's, *Histoire de Bretaigne*, fo. 787.

[2] A Papal dispensation was applied for, but was not received until after the celebration of the marriage.

[3] The dress had cost 1,960 *livres* for the cloth of gold and 2,240 *livres* for the sable, or, in modern money, a total cost of over £5,000 for materials alone. Her travelling dress had cost about £2,000, and the hangings of the two camp beds which she used were worth about £6,000: see A. de la Borderie,

The marriage contract provided for a mutual cession by the spouses of their respective rights to Brittany, and stipulated that, if Charles should predecease his Queen without leaving children of the union, she should marry his successor or the nearest heir to the throne. The intention which underlay such an agreement was patent to the world. In the hour when Charles and Anne knelt to exchange their vows in the castle of Langeais, success set its seal upon Madame's work, for in that hour the ultimate annexation of Brittany, for which she had contended, ceased to be a doubtful issue, and the feudal independence and provincial autonomy, for the suppression of which she had striven, vanished, to reappear no more.

' La Robe de Noces de la Duchesse Anne ' in *Revue des Provinces de l'Ouest*, vol. i (ii), (1853), and Le Roux de Lincy, *Vie de la Reine Anne de Bretagne*, vol. i (1860).

VIII

THE RETIREMENT OF ANNE DE BEAUJEU

The Breton harvest had been safely garnered, but it was like to leave such an aftermath as would make no light demands upon the energies of the reapers. The King had suddenly thrown over one bride to snatch another, and he must justify his action in the eyes of an astonished people. He had become the master in a great feudal fief which had never yet acknowledged the Royal authority, and he must lay with tact and prudence the foundations of his power. He had defiantly seized the prize which powerful and jealous neighbours were banded together to save from his clutches, and he must prepare to meet the consequences of his profitable but perilous temerity.

The marriage with Anne of Brittany was an event for which the popular opinion of the kingdom was wholly unprepared. The Treaty of Arras had provided for a union between Charles and Margaret, the infant children of Louis XI and of Maximilian respectively; and it was a part of the settlement there made that the French should have possession of Artois, Franche-Comté, and other Burgundian territories, which were ceded as the dowry of the bride. Moreover, as arranged at Arras, the little Archduchess had been handed over to the French, to be educated at their sovereign's Court; and for many years the nation had learned to see its Queen in 'the fair flower of Burgundy planted in the soil of France'. It was startling to find that 'the fair flower' had been contemptuously tossed aside in favour of another bloom, plucked rudely upon an alien soil; and men groping for the key to the enigma might well conclude that this was no better than the mad infatuation of romantic youth. Indeed, Charles would be fortunate if his exploit incurred no stronger condemnation. It was by no means improbable that his subjects would ask themselves whether an act which wore an air of rashness in human eyes might not have an uglier appearance in the eyes of Heaven; the reckless disregard of solemn pre-

contracts, the sudden and secret wooing, the clandestine and almost furtive marriage looked suspiciously like a defiance of established morality; and the fate of Dunois, killed by a fall from his horse on his way to witness the wedding which he was believed to have arranged, seemed to be of ill augury to a generation which was prone to detect supernatural indications in every unusual event.[1]

Alive to the necessity for defending his conduct, Charles set to work and flooded France with his explanations. On the very day of the marriage a letter was sent to the University of Paris, to reassure that body with regard to the King's action, the Royal apologist, Pierre d'Urfé, declaring that it had proceeded from the most profound political sagacity, and discounting in advance the unfavourable interpretations which uninformed critics might be tempted to place upon it. D'Urfé was writing,[2] he said, to enlighten the University about the King's marriage with Anne of Brittany. The affair had been somewhat sudden, and the uninitiated might suppose that it had proceeded from the rash impulse of a young couple who had beheld their love reflected in each other's eyes. But as a witness of the whole business he could assure the doctors that this was not the explanation, and he would advise them to suspend their judgement until they were certified of the motives by which his Majesty had been actuated in regard to this marriage.

Those motives were expounded in a Proclamation touching the King's marriage[3] in which on the 8th December a defence of his policy was put abroad for the edification of his subjects. This document declared that Charles' betrothal to Margaret of Austria had been arranged by King Louis in the hope of putting an end to war and securing peace for the kingdom; but that object it had failed signally to effect. Eager though the King had been to stretch out the hand of friendship, the King of the Romans had nevertheless levied war continuously upon him and his

[1] Molinet, *Chroniques*, in Buchon's *Collection*, vol. xlvi, p. 177; De Maulde-la-Clavière, *Histoire de Louis XII*, Part I, vol. ii, p. 257.

[2] De Maulde-la-Clavière, *op. cit.*, pp. 256–7.

[3] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iii, pp. 414–18.

kingdom from the moment of Louis XI's death, and had sought persistently to do them injury. Moreover, he had always given out that his daughter's betrothal had been forced upon him against his will, and had declared that it should not result in a marriage, if he could prevent it. The King had hoped that this attitude might proceed from evil counsel, and that in the end Maximilian would become aware of the truth and recognize the desirability of maintaining friendly relations; but time had made no change in his policy of hostility to the King; he had allied himself with the English, the ancient enemies of the King and kingdom, accepting the Garter at their hands; and such conduct was clearly repugnant to any wish for an alliance and marriage connexion with the King. Moreover, he had sent a great number of troops to Brittany, and had organized an invasion of the Duchy and County of Burgundy.

The more to annoy the King, Maximilian had sent two ambassadors to Brittany to assert that he desired to marry the Duchess—an event not only unlikely, having regard to the great distance between her country and his, but also for other reasons impossible—and his motive in doing it was to see if the King could be turned from his policy in Brittany, or induced to return Maximilian's daughter to her father's keeping. The King believes that the ambassadors never had any good or sufficient powers for concluding the marriage, and is assured by the Queen that in fact such marriage was never solemnized. Had the intention been serious, the proxy would have been in better form, and the choice of representatives different. And as a matter of fact the Emperor is known to have said that no marriage tie had ever been formed between the Queen and his son.

To avoid occasions for further wars, the King has decided to send back Maximilian's daughter to him in an honourable manner, lest he be accused of retaining her by force or asserting in her name a title to new countries.

'And in the matter of the said country of Brittany, the said King of the Romans will no longer have a pretext for concerning himself with it, as he used to do under colour of aiding the Queen; for the King has been moved by his desire for the blessings of peace and by other good considerations to contract a marriage between her and him-

self.' Had he refrained from this marriage, and refused to restore his daughter to Maximilian, his realm and people would have been continually at war on all sides and with over-numerous enemies; but now such strife will cease, or at all events be easier to endure. The King of the Romans has his hands so full that he will be glad to be rid of Brittany. The King of Aragon has required that the Duchess of Brittany should be treated as his near relative, and cannot therefore complain if the King has married her. 'And as for the English, the King could do nothing so likely to secure his kingdom against them as the said marriage, by means whereof either they will be constrained to keep the peace, or he with God's help will be able easily to prevent them from injuring his kingdom, the which he desires to discharge and relieve from the great costs, expenses, and labours incurred in divers manner in and about the said wars.'

In the judgement of a people never suspected of political obtuseness the tactics which had brought to France the rich gift of the Queen's dowry had only to be explained to secure acceptance. The enthusiastic approval of that Queen's own subjects was less easy to comprehend. Through seven long and miserable years the Bretons had suffered all evils and endured all calamities sooner than surrender the ancient freedom which they had defended through centuries of independence, and now the custodian of their liberties had given herself and her heritage into the hands of their implacable foe. So the Breton patriot might have been expected to feel. In fact, however, the marriage aroused no such sentiments, but on the contrary was everywhere welcomed with enthusiasm. The more ardent the Breton's patriotism, the more cordially did he approve a course which the truest friends of the Duchess had recommended, which her Estates had advised, and which promised those blessings of peace and security that were so urgently required by a bleeding and shattered land, and that could not in any other manner be obtained. The Duchess was known to her subjects; they had measured the strength of her character and the intensity of her Breton feeling; and they felt confident that the passionate love for her country which had shone through the clouds of failure and

defeat would burn as brightly in the sunshine of her new greatness, and would kindle into a warmer sentiment the chill indifference of their new lord. They judged truly. The object dearest to the Queen's heart was to see her faithful Bretons rewarded; and the ascendancy which she established over the mind of her husband enabled her to secure that the sufferers by her marriage should be those who had assisted the triumph of the French, and not those who had opposed it. The Vicomte de Rohan, the obsequious tool of France, whom Charles had lately made his lieutenant-general in Brittany, was removed to make room for the Prince of Orange; the Marshal de Rieux was left unemployed; and one after another Baron d'Avaugour, who had sided with the French, the Count of Laval, who had failed to side with Francis II, the Sire de Quintin, Rohan's brother, and the Sire de Montafilant, Rieux's son-in-law, were dismissed from their military commands.

The whole party which had supported the French cause in Brittany found itself menaced in the persons of these leaders, and under the stimulus of anxiety and disgust a new policy was speedily concerted among them. Rohan and his friends had betrayed their country to France in the expectation of rewards which were being denied to them. Let them avenge their wrongs by betraying it a second time in a quarter where the service would be more generously requited. Though not numerous, these schemers were powerful, and held important posts; they believed that the fate of the country rested in their hands; and they proposed to make it over to the King of England.[1]

Their instrument was a certain Pierre Le Pennec, a lawyer of Morlaix, who had already signalized himself as a rabid adherent of Marshal de Rieux. In the previous year Le Pennec had accompanied a Breton embassy to England, where he had used the opportunity to establish friendly relations with all sorts and conditions of people. There was no doubt of the feelings with which those new friends would regard the Breton marriage; and Le Pennec knew that he would be the purveyor of welcome tidings

[1] For this episode see *Archives de Bretagne*, vol ii, 'Complot Breton de MCCCCXCII, Documents Inédits', ed. A de la Borderie; Nantes, Soc. des Bibl. Bretons, 1884.

when he told them that the very men who had worked hardest for the success of King Charles were no better pleased than the English with the outcome of their labours. He encouraged his correspondents to believe that, if they would care to turn the tables upon their enemies, they had only to land in sufficient force, and the country would be theirs. Some of the greatest feudal lords would welcome them; the people would at the worst remain apathetic and quiescent; and treachery in high places would complete the ruin of the French. The Admiral of Brittany, Louis de Rohan-Guéméné, Sire de Rainefort, was a spendthrift, and had his price. Maurice du Mené, who had been dismissed from the command of the Ducal guard, and was awaiting some further degradation, would hand over the town of Morlaix. The gates of Brest would be opened by its captain, Guillaume Carreau, who had so gallantly held the fortress against English and Breton attack in one of the crises of the Breton struggle.

If Henry VII had landed at once and in force, as Le Pennec advised, that struggle might after all have had a different ending, for the weak French forces which garrisoned the province could not have checked a real invasion, and of the local levies a large part was under the influence of Rohan and his fellow-conspirators. But Henry did not come. He neither rejected the notion, nor adopted it, but played with it. He ought to have come in April, but did not appear. He promised to come in June, but still there was no sign of him. Then came news that an English fleet had appeared to the eastward, sailing along the shores of Normandy, and ravaging as it went. The news was true, but the hopes it raised were delusive When the heralded armada arrived, it was found to consist of a weak squadron so miserably inadequate to its task that it could not even force a landing against the peasantry of Tréguier. Some more impressive demonstration was required to galvanize into activity the slumbering elements of revolt, but no such demonstration was ever made, and a plot which under other circumstances might have altered the destinies of kingdoms, ended in the smoke which drifted away over the waters of the Channel from a few burning villages along the Norman coast.

The plot had failed, and the plotters were at the mercy of the Government which they had designed to overthrow. Charles used his advantage with moderation, as though conscious that the crime of the conspirators was in part excused by the ingratitude of his own conduct. Amongst all the partisans of the faithless Rohan two subaltern agents alone were visited with punishment, whilst the fidelity of the province as a whole was rewarded in the manner best calculated to ensure its continuance. On the 7th July, at the request of the Breton Estates, an ordinance was promulgated by which the privileges of Brittany were solemnly confirmed. No Breton cause was to be tried in the first instance but before a Breton court, and the Breton Parlement was recognized as the supreme appellate tribunal save in two specified cases of miscarriage of justice.[1] Taxation was to be levied in the shape of the *fouages* and other dues which the province had been accustomed to pay under its own Dukes, and legal security was given that the often abused impost known as the *billot* would be applied to its proper purpose, which was the upkeep of the towns. Finally, the ordinance contained provisions designed to afford protection to the province in times of peace against the dreaded activities of the provost marshal.

In this grant or confirmation of privileges Charles struck a happy mean between a politic recognition of Breton claims and an impolitic abnegation of Royal attributes. The liberties preserved by the ordinance contained no features antagonistic to the principle of centralized government; they constituted at the worst an administrative nuisance; and, being cherished by the people, they might be left in Brittany, as others like them had been kept alive elsewhere, when similar fiefs had been annexed or absorbed. But the Royal indulgence did not extend to provincial institutions conflicting with the Royal supremacy or tending to preserve a memory of ancient independence. From the day of his marriage Charles regarded Brittany as an integral part of his dominions, and he did not intend that the Bretons should hold any different opinion. The King's garrisons continued to hold the strong places of the country,

[1] 'A condition cependant de l'appel au Parlement de Paris dans les deux cas de deni de justice et de faux jugement': *Ordonnances*, vol. xx, p. 336.

and the King's orders had to be obeyed. Moreover, the Chancellorship was abolished upon the specific ground that 'in pursuance of the ancient institutions and ordinances relating to the Chancellorship of France it is customary to have but one sole Chancellor as head and administrator of justice'.[1] The action and the motive were alike significant. Brittany might preserve her provincial characteristics, so far as they were innocuous; but she must subordinate them to higher interests, so far as they conflicted with the supremacy of the sovereign, who henceforth was to be her master, or impaired the unity of the kingdom, in which she was now to be comprised.

The acquisition of Brittany possessed an importance for France which it would not be easy to overrate. To some extent its value might be measured by the magnitude of the effort which had been required to make it. An interval of seven years had separated the marriage at Langeais from the treaty by which Madame had first espoused the cause of the Breton rebels, and during those years Brittany, despite her divisions, had offered an unyielding opposition to the armed might of France. In enumerating the advantages which his union with Anne had brought to the kingdom, Charles justly reckoned the inclusion in his own dominions of the virile race whose martial qualities had sustained that gallant resistance. Not only, he said, would France be relieved of the burden of supporting the great body of troops who had been employed in guarding the frontier of Brittany and garrisoning its strongholds, but also 'the King's power is strengthened by the addition on land of 12,000 combatants, ready to go wherever they are ordered, and at sea of 600 ships manned by mariners as good as any in Christendom; and in the late Duke's time the revenue of the Duchy was worth from 800,000 to 1,200,000 *livres* after the payment of officers and soldiers had been provided for'.[2] Charles did not rate his achievement too high. By the annexation of Brittany an addition great in extent and inestimable in value was made to the coast-line of France, and her population was strengthened by the inclusion of a hardy and daring seafaring people

[1] Dupuy, *Histoire de la Réunion de la Bretagne à la France*, vol. ii, p. 244.
[2] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, ed. Pélicier, vol. iii, pp. 422–3.

destined to become the mainstay of her maritime power. Nor was the annexation less valuable for the possible dangers which it removed than for the positive advantages which it conferred. There was no safety for France so long as the Armorican peninsula continued to deserve the reproach which Charles had levelled at it when he described it as 'the refuge and asylum of our evil-wishers and the hope of the enemies of our realm', so long as the sea-borne trade of France must pass and repass before the haunts of Breton pirates and privateers, and so long as Breton ports stood open to welcome the intending invaders of her soil. To all this the marriage at Langeais put an end for ever. Submitting to the extinction of their independence with a grace that matched the courage they had displayed in defending it, a high-spirited people exalted the union of Crowns into the outward and visible sign of a spiritual union of hearts; and the history of four centuries is there to show how provincial pride may keep alive the memory of a glorious past without derogating from the wider patriotism which is born of a single devotion to a greater and a nobler State.

Though Brittany was won at last, it remained to settle accounts with the powers which had banded themselves together to prevent what Charles' marriage had accomplished. Two courses were open to the King, who might either defy the hostile coalition or endeavour to pacify its wrath. The bolder policy was worth a trial, for it was less venturesome than it seemed. Henry had gone to war reluctantly, under the imperious necessity of saving Brittany, if he could; but Brittany was irretrievably lost, and Henry had no inclination for a purposeless Continental war: the Catholic sovereigns would not willingly embark upon another serious struggle on the morrow of their great Moorish enterprise: and from Maximilian, deeply though he had been injured by the theft of his bride and the unceremonious jilting of his daughter, not much was to be apprehended, so long as he had to reckon with the hostility of Flanders and the apathy of an unsympathetic Empire. In the face of foreign dangers as great as these, intensified by domestic revolt, Anne de Beaujeu had succeeded, not only in defending the integrity of the kingdom, but also in

marching to new conquests; and had her voice still been supreme in the councils of the State, there can be little doubt that the policy of concession would have been rejected with scorn. But Charles had begun to assert his authority, and he took a different view. Étienne de Vesc, his tutor, and the young counsellors to whom he had given his confidence had persuaded him that the path of glory lay across the Alps to those enchanted Italian fields, where the Angevin claims to Naples invited the presence of a conqueror; and with youth's uncritical enthusiasm for romantic adventure, Charles determined to sacrifice the substance to the shadow, and to patch up a peace with the neighbouring powers whose neutrality was essential to the enterprise which he had in view.

Charles achieved, or thought to achieve, his purpose by treaties with the King of England, the Catholic sovereigns, and Maximilian signed at Étaples on the 3rd November 1492, at Barcelona on the 6th January 1493, and at Senlis on the 23rd May of the same year.

Though the English had let slip the opportunity which the Breton conspiracy had placed in their way, the omission had not deterred Henry from dilating upon his warlike intentions both to his own subjects and to his Spanish allies; and in the autumn of 1492 he had felt that he must show some sign of acting up to his professions. Accordingly, he sent his fleet to Sluys, where Maximilian's general, the Duke of Saxony, was besieging Philip of Cleves, and at the same time he himself crossed to the French coast with an army of 1,600 horse and 25,000 foot. Sluys fell on the 16th October, and on the 22nd of the same month Henry's army encamped before Boulogne. Scarcely had the English taken up their position when they learned that the enemy desired to submit proposals for peace. Despite his boasts about recovering Normandy and Guyenne, Henry knew well that the adventure in which he was engaged promised a much less glorious issue; it was even doubtful whether Boulogne, strongly garrisoned and amply supplied, might not be able to resist his attack; in that event his expeditionary force must encounter 'the great and outrageous cold of the winter season' with no better comfort than might reach it from over the sea through 'the great rage

and tempest of winds and weather'[1]; and this would be a serious matter, if the Milanese ambassador was right in his opinion that 'although the English are a warlike race, and feared by the French, yet they require every comfort, even in the ardour of war'.[2] Moreover, the French were offering terms which Henry could scarcely have brought himself to decline, if there was any substance in the charge which Bacon preferred against him of regarding war as a favourable occasion for securing a double profit, 'upon his subjects for the war, and upon his enemies for the peace, like a good merchant that maketh his gain both upon the commodities exported and imported back again'.[3] Never before had an English sovereign been offered the prospect of so lucrative a bargain with a King of France. Charles undertook to discharge the whole debt, amounting to 620,000 crowns, which his Queen had contracted for the defence of Brittany, and, in addition, to pay a sum of 125,000 crowns for arrears of the pension promised by Louis XI to Edward IV—an indemnity estimated to represent sums varying between two and four million pounds sterling in modern money. It was further agreed that neither ruler should aid the enemies of the other: Henry undertook that he would give no assistance to the King of the Romans, and Charles promised that he would not support Henry's rebels. Such in brief, were the terms embodied in the Treaty of Étaples.

For years after the Treaty the indemnity played a conspicuous part in Anglo-French relations, forming a sort of political barometer by means of which the state of the international weather might be gauged. Thus, it would seem that no instalment was forthcoming in the autumn of 1496, when Henry was a member of the league which had been formed under Papal auspices to drive the French from their Italian conquests; and the cessation of payments in 1512 was indicative of the policy which in the following year would once again bring an English army of invasion

[1] Rymer, *Foedera*, vol. xii, p. 492.

[2] Raimondo di Raimondi de Sancino, Milanese ambassador in England, to the Duke of Milan, 18 December 1497; *Calendar of State Papers, Milanese*, vol. i, p. 340.

[3] Bacon, 'Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh', in the *Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. J. Spedding, vol. vi, p. 120.

upon the soil of France. In the summer of 1514, when about two-thirds of the liability would appear to have been discharged, the unpaid balance of the Étaples indemnity was merged in a new pecuniary obligation undertaken by the King of France. During the whole of the period which separated the new Treaty from the old, the policy which Charles VIII had followed at Étaples had exercised a marked influence upon the attitude of England, as foreign observers had been quick to perceive. On the 6th December 1497 the Milanese ambassador in England wrote to his master, the Duke, in the following terms: 'To tell the truth, his Majesty [Henry VII] is right in behaving well to the French, as every year he obtains 5,000 [? 50,000] crowns from them, some say for observing the peace made between King Edward and King Louis; others, whom I believe, say that it is because his Majesty, having supplied the Duchess of Brittany with much money, receiving in pledge some fortresses which the King of France afterwards captured, the king here, among other articles, arranged with the French when he went to Picardy, provided that the money lent to the duchess, now Queen of France, should be restored by the payment of 50,000 crowns yearly. The French not only pay this sum to his Majesty, but with his knowledge and consent they give provision to the leading men of the realm, to wit, the Lord Chamberlain, Master Braiset, Master Lovel, and as these leading satraps are very rich, the provision has to be very large. I hear also that they give to others, but this is not so well established as [in] the case of these three.' [1]

By the compact with the Catholic sovereigns the old alliances between France and Spain were renewed, Ferdinand and Isabella undertaking to aid the King of France against his enemies, and in particular against the English, against Maximilian, and against Maximilian's son, the Archduke Philip, so long as any of them should be at war with France. They also promised that none of their children should marry into the family of Henry VII, or into that of Maximilian, or with any enemy of France without the express consent of Charles. Charles in return undertook to give aid and succour to Ferdinand and Isabella, and to

[1] *Calendar of State Papers, Milanese*, vol. i, p. 335.

restore to Ferdinand the disputed provinces of Roussillon and Cerdagne.

The Treaty of Barcelona has been fiercely assailed by patriotic Frenchmen on the ground that it gave away, gratuitously and against the will of its inhabitants, the territory which formed the natural bulwark of France on the Pyrenean side. By his next effort in diplomacy, the treaty with Maximilian, Charles proceeded, though with better excuse, to denude the kingdom on its north-eastern border. For many years France had found in the friendship of the Flemish communes her great safeguard against aggression from the Low Countries. This safeguard, however, the French desertion of the Flemings at Frankfort had seriously impaired. Left to their own resources, Philip of Cleves and the insurgent communes had been in no condition to offer a protracted resistance, and in the summer of 1492 the Frankfort chickens had begun to come home to roost. In June the Gantois rose, executed the leader who was primarily identified with the policy of resistance, and, on the 29th July, made peace with Maximilian at Cadzant. Already Liége had returned to the obedience of its Bishop, who was Maximilian's ally; and in October Philip of Cleves, defeated at Sluys, laid down his arms. In November Arras succumbed to a surprise attack, and in December Maximilian's forces invaded Franche-Comté, where, if a Burgundian authority is to be believed, they were everywhere greeted by cries of 'Vive le Roi des Romains! Vive le Duc de Bourgogne!' Thus there were grounds upon which Charles might view with apprehension the progress of a conflict which had for its object the recovery of the whole Burgundian inheritance, and there was something to be said for a policy which would bring that conflict to an end.[1] Charles made pro-

[1] 'The King's policy did not escape criticism. 'The Admiral tries to upset the peace in every way', wrote the Milanese ambassador on the 4th April. 'He persuades the King that the Emperor only wants peace in order to deceive him and set up Burgundy again. He says, if the King gives back the daughter, one of two evils will follow, either her father will never marry her, saying that she is the wife of his Majesty, and thus make out that the King's children are bastards, or they will try to make King of England the boy who calls himself the son of King Edward, who fled thither, and give him this daughter to wife, so as by his means to make perpetual war on France. These

posals for peace in February, and on the 23rd May peace was signed at Senlis. The treaty established amity and union between Charles and Maximilian. The Archduchess Margaret, the rejected bride of the King of France,[1] was to be restored honourably to her father, and her marriage contract cancelled. Charles surrendered to the Archduke Philip Franche-Comté, Artois, Charolais, and Noyers, the territories which he had acquired as Margaret's dowry, and undertook to restore Hesdin, Aire, and Béthune, so soon as Philip, having come of age, should do homage for the lands which he held of the French Crown. Charles would then recover Arras, and in the meantime he was to retain possession of Mâcon, Auxerre, and Bar-sur-Seine until an arbitral sentence should determine their true ownership.

The terms upon which Charles had thus bought off the hostility of the coalition have incurred general condemnation among French writers. The price he had paid was certainly large. He had promised an enormous indemnity to Henry VII; he had abandoned Roussillon and Cerdagne to Ferdinand; and he had surrendered to Maximilian and his son a great part of the territories which the dexterity of Louis XI had snatched from the wreck of Charles the Bold's fortunes. Yet it would be less than just to Charles VIII to forget that upon grounds of strict morality it would have been difficult to justify the retention of that which he agreed to give up; and the attitude which he had adopted towards Brittany at the instance of his Chancellor, Rochefort, showed that he was not insensible to the obligations of honour. Of the sum which he contracted to pay to the English a part represented a debt legally due from Louis XI, and the rest, though expended in actual

arguments have left the King very perplexed': *Calendar of State Papers, Milanese*, vol. i, p. 291.

[1] One evening at dinner at Amboise, after the King's marriage with Anne of Brittany, the gentlemen in attendance upon the Archduchess commented upon the wetness of the year and the acidity of the wine. 'Ne vous étonnez pas', said Margaret, 'si le vin est vert; les sarments n'ont rien valu.' By the 'sarments de vigne qui portent la vendange' the humiliated damsel 'dénotait les serments du Roy . . . touchant le mariage de lui et d'elle, lesquels toutefois n'avoient eu nulle efficace, ains lui avoient apporté breuvage de tristesse et de toute aigreur': see Rossignol, 'Histoire de Bourgogne', in the *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de Dijon*, Second Series, vol. ix, p. 118.

resistance to Charles himself, was yet a liability incurred by the lady whom he had married and on account of the province which he had acquired. Nor in surrendering Roussillon and Cerdagne, or Franche-Comté, Artois, and Charolais, was Charles abandoning territory which had ever formed an integral portion of the dominions of his predecessors. In the Pyrenean provinces France was in no better position than that of a mortgagee, with the equity of redemption unextinguished. In the Burgundian lands she had been let into possession under the terms of a contract, the essential feature of which she had herself neglected to perform. That which made Charles' conduct worthy of condemnation was not so much the character of his bargain [1] as the motive by which he had been actuated in making it. Judged merely as a bargain, it might readily be defended in its moral aspect, and from a political point of view it might have been pronounced to be not inexpedient, had it been made with a desire to secure an interval of tranquillity for a kingdom too long strange to the blessings of peace. But it is impossible to believe that Charles had been influenced primarily either by a regard for public right or by a perception of political expediency, and the real weakness in his policy was that his concessions were made in the vain hope of facilitating a rash adventure. The policy was founded upon the assumption that gratitude for favours received would keep Ferdinand and Maximilian true to the engagements into which they had entered, and that bitter and treacherous enemies could be trusted to maintain a benevolent neutrality while Charles marched

[1] In the opinion of Henry VII's most recent biographer (Gladys Temperley, *Henry VII*, in the series of Lives of the Kings and Queens of England, ed. Robert S. Rait and William Page : see p. 111) Charles VIII had separated England from Spain, gained Ferdinand as an ally, deprived his most bitter enemy, Maximilian, of the help of his confederates, consolidated the conquest of Brittany, and put a turn to the persistent aggression of England which in past ages had brought on his country such grievous evils. 'As far as the relations of England and France are concerned, the treaty of Etaples, which remained in force all through the reign, marks the point at which mediaevalism gave way to modernism. With it ended the last attempt of an English King to push his claims to the throne of France. Henceforth the mediaeval ambition drops into the background, and anti-French feeling ceases to be the pivot of English policy. Wars of conquest are replaced by years of peace and friendly commercial rivalry.'

forth to new triumphs upon Italian fields. It is for the folly of that confiding assumption that Charles ought to stand arraigned at the bar of history.

The liquidation of old difficulties at Étaples, Barcelona, and Senlis, and the inception of the King's new Italian policy mark a turning-point in the history of the reign. The regency of Anne de Beaujeu had come to an end. Indications that such an event was imminent had multiplied apace since the day when the King had supported Rochefort against his sister in the summer of 1488, and had replied to the Breton ambassadors without reference to his advisers. On the one hand, Pierre de Beaujeu had succeeded on the death of Jean, Duke of Bourbon, to an inheritance which made him one of the richest princes in Christendom, and caused Madame under the pressure of numerous and important private affairs to absent herself with increasing frequency from Court. It was at this time, too, that after many years of married life a new interest came to Anne with the birth of her daughter Suzanne, whose delicacy demanded incessant care; and the heart which had never quailed in the presence of political danger had learned to tremble beside the cradle of an ailing child.[1] On the other hand, Charles, as he emerged from adolescence, grew daily more impatient of control, and a new coldness began to show itself in his attitude towards his sister. Madame remarked and commented upon the change, believing that slanderous tongues had been at work, and Charles endeavoured to exculpate himself. 'My good sister and sweetheart,' he wrote to her,[2] 'you believe, so Loys du Peschin tells me, that I have been listening to reports against your honour. I told him that I had heard no such reports, and I assure you that no one would venture to speak to me in such a strain, for I would not credit one tittle of such tattle, as I hope to tell you myself, when we are once more together.' The disclaimer was handsome, and for the moment the tension became relaxed; but Charles' protestations were the swan-song of youth's deferential awe, and no protestations could alter the reality of his discontent. Though he might not be ready to admit

[1] La Mure, *Histoire des Ducs de Bourbon*, vol. ii, p. 429.

[2] [24 June 1491 ?] *Lettres de Charles VIII*, vol. v, p. 243.

it, and though as yet he might even disguise it from himself, the fact was that the King was beginning to chafe under the yoke of the stern mentor who was rarely seen to smile, and had never been known to yield.[1] Youth with its exuberances, its enthusiasms, its generous impulses, its romantic aspirations, felt ill at ease in the chill atmosphere where the Regent brought conduct to the test of a calculating statecraft, and judged ideas in the light of a critical intelligence. It could not be expected that a King who had reached his twenty-first year would submit indefinitely to a distasteful control; and Orleanist intrigues, the glamour of Italy, and the influence of his haughty and vindictive Breton bride were all conspiring to hasten on the moment when Charles would assert his independence.

It was in the liberation of the imprisoned Duke of Orleans that Charles gave the first definite proof of his desire for emancipation. The severity meted out to the captive of Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier was ascribed, and with justice, to the influence of Anne de Beaujeu. Brantôme, with his invariable addiction to defamatory gossip, advances a characteristically malicious explanation of the Regent's attitude to Orleans. Madame, he says, had fallen in love with the youthful Louis; the Duke had disregarded her partiality; called in to umpire at a tennis-match in which Louis was playing, Anne had been led by pique to give her decision against him; and the angry Duke had been goaded into an incautious outburst of offensive insinuation. A story which cannot be disproved need not on that account be accepted, and I shall have told the discreditable tale of Orleans' intrigues, treacheries, and rebellions in vain, if I have failed to make it apparent that there may have been a better reason than Brantôme chose to acknowledge for the adoption of rigorous measures by those who bore the responsibilities of power. 'Hitherto', Anne told her brother shortly after the battle of Saint-Aubin-du-Cormier, 'you have always used clemency towards your rebel subjects, but they have not kept faith with you. Wherefore it is very necessary that you rely no longer on their fine promises, but rather make such judicious provision that no inconvenience can ensue. Nothing, certainly, would delight

[1] La Mure, *op. cit.*, pp. 426–7.

me so much as a real understanding with them, if you could compass it; but past experience induces me to write as I do.'[1]

To take up the cudgels on behalf of the imprisoned Duke, and by playing upon the humane instincts of the young King to bring about a reversal of the policy with which the name of Anne was associated, seemed to her enemies at the Court to offer the best prospect of subverting the authority which stood in the way of their ambition. If the ascendancy of the Regent was growing tiresome to Charles, it had long since become odious to the little band of his companions and confidants, who thirsted to exploit their influence with the King, and for whom the fall of Madame would herald the advent of a golden age. These men were Étienne de Vesc, Bailli of Meaux, the King's tutor; de Vesc's friend, Guillaume Briçonnet, the son of one of Louis XI's most astute and successful financial agents, and the son-in-law of Jean de Beaune, the wealthy Receiver-General of Languedoc; the Sire de Miolans, a Royal Chamberlain, and René de Cossé, the Grand Pannetier, both far advanced in the intimacy of the King; and Georges d'Amboise, Bishop of Montauban, an ardent partisan of Orleans. No novice in Court intrigue, Georges d'Amboise had already crossed swords with Madame, and as a result of the abortive conspiracy of 1487 he had been obliged to flee to Avignon, to escape from the Regent's wrath. After fifteen months of exile he had been permitted to return to Court on an express undertaking by his family that he would abstain from opposition to the Regent. So far from honouring the engagement into which his relatives had entered on his behalf, the scheming Bishop had lost no time in throwing himself into the arms of Anne's enemies, and he had lately been successful in bringing them a powerful recruit. On more than one occasion our narrative has glanced at the active and important part which had been played by Graville, the Admiral, in the counsels of the Regency. The Beaujeus had found no more zealous or able supporter, and their favour had raised him to a position of authority which was second only to

[1] Cited by M. Pélicier, *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu*, p. 178.

their own. But Graville saw what was coming; he had no inclination for the disgrace which loyalty to his patroness would render inevitable; and with a shameless disregard of honour and gratitude he deserted the author of his fortunes in the very crisis of her own fate. A marriage between his daughter, Jeanne, and the Bishop of Montauban's nephew, the Sire de Chaumont, proclaimed his desertion to the world.

From the first moment of the Duke's committal to gaol, Orleanist influence had been busy round the King. In the summer of 1489 Dunois, by his insistence with Maximilian and his promises to Maximilian's courtiers, had almost contrived that the liberation of the Duke should be made a condition of the treaty of Frankfort. Of late the efforts being made in Louis' behalf had been redoubled; d'Albret, high in the Royal favour since the surrender of Nantes, had pleaded instantly for forgiveness; and with a touching devotion which the captive Lothario had done little to merit, his gentle and saintly wife had poured out a stream of tearful supplications at the feet of her sister, the Regent, and her brother, the King. The battle was more than half won in the mind of Charles, who was restrained from indulging his inclination to clemency by his lingering awe of Madame, when her enemies once again forced the question into the forefront of Court politics. De Vesc, d'Amboise, and the rest began to ply Charles with arguments well suited to his character and intelligence. Reproaching him with his tame submission to the will of a woman, they urged him to play a man's part, and assured him that no occasion could ever be more suitable for the assertion of his authority. The conditions which had justified severity, if, indeed, it had ever been justifiable, had passed away; neither at home nor abroad, neither in domestic politics nor in the affair of the Breton marriage, was it any longer possible for Orleans to play a part prejudicial to the interests of the Crown; and if Charles would set him free, a devotion which Louis' relations with the Breton Court might render fruitful in timely service would be the reward of his generosity. Wincing under the implied rebuke, and succumbing to the specious reasoning, Charles resolved to ignore Madame's wishes, and to set his cousin at liberty. He

kept his intention shrouded in the deepest secrecy. On the 27th June 1491, when Anne was absent from Court, he left Plessis on the pretext of a hunting expedition, and, accompanied by a few carefully chosen attendants, went to spend the night at Montrichard. On the morrow he rode on again as far as the Pont de Barangon, at the point of confluence of the Yèvre and the Cher, and thence he sent forward Stuart d'Aubigny to Bourges with a written order for the deliverance of Orleans. D'Aubigny hastened to Bourges, released the Duke, and led him back to the place where the King was awaiting him. On catching sight of Charles, Louis threw himself from his horse, and knelt in tears at the feet of his deliverer. The King was moved by the dramatic reunion with the idol of his boyhood, and was touched by the humility of his grateful penitence. Stooping graciously, he raised Orleans from his knees, and clasped him to his bosom. From this moment the pair were inseparable. The Duke shared the King's kit, slept in his bed, and returned at his side to Tours. The sequestration of his property was annulled; the criminal proceedings begun against him before the Parlement were abandoned; and a signal mark of the Royal favour was conferred upon him in his appointment to the Governorship of Normandy, which the wealth of the province and its proximity to Brittany and to England made one of the most important and most eagerly coveted offices in the gift of the Crown.

In September, at the instance of d'Albret, a formal reconciliation was effected between Orleans and Pierre de Beaujeu. It was characteristic of the Beaujeus that they should submit with a good grace to the inevitable, but there was no mistaking the significance of the events which had occurred, and Madame would have been more than human, if she had viewed them with inward composure. As she well knew, they sounded the knell of her power. 'All these things', says Saint-Gelais, 'were hidden from Monseigneur and Madame de Bourbon.'[1] The King had followed a course which Anne had always condemned, and, as was shown by the suddenness and secrecy of his actions, he had followed it deliberately, in contempt of her disapproval. Moreover, the affair of Orleans was not the only

[1] Saint-Gelais, *Histoire de Louis XII* (ed. Th. Godefroy, Paris, 1622), p. 70

instance in which the inclinations of the King conflicted with his sister's counsels. Like all the more responsible servants of the Crown, the Beaujeus looked with apprehension upon those romantic schemes of Italian adventure which had captured the young sovereign's imagination. As long as Brittany continued to resist French encroachment, and to receive encouragement and support from powerful allies, for so long the conquest of Naples would remain an impracticable vision; but it began to take on a more substantial shape with those very successes of Madame's policy which operated to bring its realization within the bounds of practical politics. The Papal Prothonotary, Flores, sent home to his master in February 1490 an account of how the Prince of Salerno was occupying himself at the French Court in urging the Italian enterprise, and how he had furnished minute information about the best way to conduct a war against the kingdom of Naples, of which he had drawn up a map. But 'the disposition of the French Court to make war for the Pope's interests on Ferdinand of Arragon, King of Naples', Flores added, 'is impeded by the Breton war'.[1] Whilst the marriage of Anne of Brittany removed one of the obstacles to the indulgence of the inclination which Flores had noted in the King, the others were disposed of by the treaties of Étaples, Barcelona, and Senlis; and the Court began to be swept forward on a torrent to which the Beaujeus were too proud and too wise to offer a futile resistance.

Lastly, Madame had to reckon with the hostility of the King's Breton bride. Offended by the authority which the Regent enjoyed, the Queen threw into the scales against her the whole of the considerable influence which she rapidly acquired over the mind of her impressionable husband. It was nothing to Anne of Brittany that Madame had rendered to the King services which he could never repay, nothing to her that her own position was the result of Madame's exertions and the outcome of her policy. As a Breton, she saw in the Regent the organizer of French victory, and she hated her on that account from the bottom of her Breton heart and with all the fervour of her Breton patriotism. As a wife, as a Queen, and as a woman, she

[1] *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, vol. i, pp. 184–5.

disliked her influence, coveted her authority, and resented her position. And it may be, as Brantôme tells us, that the imperious daughter of Kings took no pains to conciliate the goodwill of the damsel whom she had placed upon the throne. 'Madame wanted', says Brantôme, 'to give Queen Anne a taste of her prerogative and authority; but, as the saying is, she found that the boot was on the other foot [1]; for Queen Anne, as I have said, was a cunning Breton, very haughty and arrogant towards her equals; so that Madame de Bourbon was obliged to give way and let her sister-in-law assert her Royal rank, and uphold her grandeur and majesty, as was reasonable; but it must have vexed her sorely; for during her Regency she clung fiercely to the dignity of her position.' [2] Already threatened by the King's impatience of control, and in part undermined by Orleanist intrigue, Madame's waning authority succumbed outright before the unrelenting and ungenerous animosity of a spiteful and vindictive girl.

With the dawn of the new era which ushers in the personal government of Charles VIII the figure of Madame de Beaujeu disappears unobtrusively from the political stage. So quiet, indeed, was her exit, so little heeded or remarked, that in the excitement of their new ideas contemporaries seem scarcely to have observed that the reins of power had fallen from the hands which had held them so firmly and so wisely during eight critical years. It is not the least of Anne's services to her country that she should have laid down thus submissively the authority which in the like conditions almost any other woman would have struggled to retain; and the manner in which she divested herself of power is the best answer to the accusation that she had desired it, not for the good of the monarchy, but for her own selfish ends. In her own day and since, she has been charged with faults which, if we are to call things by their plain names, must be described as rapacity and treason. She has been accused of making a mercenary use of her political influence; of extorting from her brother's

[1] 'Mais elle trouvoit bien chausseure à son pied'; literally, 'she met her match'.

[2] Brantôme, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. viii, pp. 102–3. See above, pp. 52–3, for the original text, which is quoted in the note at the end of Ch. 2.

inexperience the conversion of the Bourbon inheritance into one of those great feudal fiefs which had so often endangered the throne; and then of devising this principality to her son-in-law with the express injunction that he should consolidate it by the practice of treason. Applied to a woman with Anne's political record, such accusations deserve careful scrutiny, and it is impossible to form a just estimate of her career without examining the evidence upon which the charges are based.

That foreign powers suspected her of being open to pecuniary inducements cannot be disputed. The Catholic sovereigns seem to have assumed that the offer of a bribe would secure her co-operation in their scheme for marrying Charles VIII to an Infanta; that Ludovic il Moro at a later period hoped to buy her support, is proved by the evidence of Spinelli, the Lyons banker; and at the time when her influence was at its height, Hieronimo Zorzi, the Venetian ambassador, wrote about her to the Signory in highly disparaging terms. He was assured, he told them, that she had made much money out of the negotiations for the surrender of Zizim, the Sultan's brother, and that the King of Hungary had promised to make her a considerable present, besides what she had already had, before removing Zizim from France. 'Madame de Beaujeu', Zorzi went on, 'is very avaricious, and does anything for money, regardless of the honour of God and of the Crown. To thwart this negotiation, the Pope must promise her a considerable sum of money before Zizim be removed from France; otherwise, should the Pope take no further steps, Madame de Beaujeu may, for gain, consent to Zizim being surrendered to the King of Hungary.'[1]

[1] *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, vol. i, pp. 166–7. The original is to be found in Buser, *Die Beziehungen der Mediceer zu Frankreich während der Jahre 1434-1494 in ihrem Zusammenhang mit den allgemeinen Verhältnissen Italiens* (Leipsic, 1879), appendix of documents, p. 518; Hieronimo Zorzi to the Signory, 13 September 1487: 'Et per un altro mio amico, principe Excmo., de existimation et precio, quale e reputa de bon credito apresso Mad. de Beauieu ho inteso cum bon modo, che ditta mad. de questa cosa guadagna danari assai, et el Re de Hungaria lha promesso darli un gran don oltra quelli lha havuto, avanti se trazi el fratel del Turco de questo paese. Et per dir el suo parere disce: Mad. de Beauieu e molto avara et fa tute cose per danari, ne ha respetto al honor de Dio, ne al honor dela corona, et che a voler intuto guastar questa practica, saria necessario, el papa facesse bona

As evidence of the currency of opinions unfavourable to Anne de Beaujeu the Venetian ambassador's letter is conclusive, and the unequivocal enunciation of such opinions by a diplomatic agent in a dispatch to his Government is a fact which cannot lightly be dismissed. The apologist of Madame is in the further difficulty that charges of secret corruption are by their very nature almost impossible to disprove. However cynical and shameless the age, the statesman who acts against his conscience for reward and rears the edifice of his policy upon a foundation of tainted gold, will do his best to ensure that his offence shall not be blazoned abroad to the world, or the record of it be perpetuated for the censure of posterity. When insinuations of venality are under examination, the only test to which, as a rule, their truth or falsity can be brought is the test of probability, as evidenced by results. The application of such a test in the case of Anne de Beaujeu is favourable to her reputation. It is a curious circumstance that Charles VIII did not wed a Spanish bride, and that the Sultan's brother was not made over to the King of Hungary, though in each case the policy could have been defended by specious argument, and in neither was its accomplishment beyond the range of the Regent's authority. Moreover, Spinelli expressly says, in reporting Ludovic's essay in corruption, that in matters of high policy Madame was not to be deflected by the prospect of pecuniary gain from the formation of an independent judgement and the expression of an unbiassed opinion. Ludovic il Moro, he told Piero de' Medici, is engaged in carrying on a campaign of corruption amongst those in authority around the King, and 'as a matter of fact your friend believes that the action of some of the King's trusted advisers—thinking, possibly, that they are doing well—in bringing him to his present opinion, is attributable to Signor Ludovic's largesses'. With the mercenary conduct of those venal counsellors the disinterested attitude of Anne de Beaujeu contrasted sharply; for since she distrusted the proposals of the

promessa de danari a darli, avanti chel fratel del turco sia tracto de franza; aliter non se facendo per el pontefice altra provisione, el dubita che Mad. de Beauieu senza alcun respetto ad altro, per guadagnar consentira el sia dado al Re de Hungaria.'

Milanese ruler, she turned a deaf ear to his solicitations. 'I have heard', said Spinelli, 'that M. Dalbingni [M. d'Aubigny] . . . spoke to Madame de Bourbon, and told her that Signor Ludovic would be pleased to give her a pension of twelve thousand ducats a year upon the understanding that she would serve him in that event, . . . and I am told that Madame would not listen, because she is not of that opinion.'[1] That Spinelli should thus exonerate Anne de Beaujeu is more significant than that Zorzi should be ready to adopt current suspicions in an age so little sensible of the obligations of honour as to acquiesce in illicit gain without question or disapproval as the natural perquisite of power.

By comparison with the charge of suffering her foreign policy to be deflected by bribes the imputation that Madame utilized her influence for the purpose of personal enrichment in the conduct of domestic affairs is of secondary

[1] Buser, *Beziehungen der Mediceer zu Frankreich*, p. 540; Lorenzo Spinelli at Lyons to Piero de' Medici, 24 August 1493: 'Il ducha dorliens e ducha di burbone el amiraglio non sono doppenione questa impresa se faccia e anno pocha fede nel Sor. Lodovico. . . . Per ghuadagnare di questi Signori chissono intorno al re in qualche alturita, il Sr. Lodovico a donato di molto danari. Noi ne paghamo IIm. a mons. dimiolans [M. de Miolans] et altanti a mons. dalbingni, [M. d'Aubigny], che e quello chi fu imbasciadore a Milano et Coximo comprendo ne paghassi altri IIm. a II altri; o inteso che M. Dalbingni na avuti deglaltri et o inteso, parlo a Madame de burbone et che le disse, che il Sre. Lodovico era contento dare allei XIIm. ducati lanno dipensione et ella loservissi in questo caso, hoferendone dare altri XIIm. apiu altri ghovernatori et ho inteso madama non vi volle prestare orechi, perche lej nonne di questo parere. Inefetto lamico vostro e di parere, che il danaro che il Sre. Lodovico adonato et dona, sia chagone difare che alchuni in chuj il re a fede et chi forse credono ben fare, labbia messo in questo hoppenione.' There may be a question whether the words, 'perche lej nonne di questo parere', constitute an absolute or a limited testimony to Madame's integrity. In the second part of his 'Notice Biographique et Historique sur Étienne de Vesc' (*Annuaire Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de France*, 1879, pp. 330–1) M. A. de Boislisle gave a rendering of the letter, which had, he said, been 'donnée par M. Buser, . . . mais avec des incorrections qui la rendent inintelligible'; he translated the sentence in question: 'On raconte que Madame ne voulut pas prêter l'oreille à cette ouverture, parce que tel n'est point son goût'; and his rendering was adopted by M. P. Pélicier, *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu*, pp. 209–10. It seems possible to interpret Spinelli's language in a more restricted sense, and to suppose him to mean that Madame rejected Ludovic's overture, not through a general dislike of bribes, but because in that particular case she did not approve of the policy for which her support was solicited.

importance. That she received pecuniary presents from her brother during her Regency, her receipts are there to prove—6,000 *livres* in 1486, 2,000 *livres* in 1488, 4,000 *livres* in April 1489, and another 4,500 *livres* in September of the same year. Her own account of the matter is that she took these gifts 'to aid us in supporting the great costs and expenses incumbent upon us in the King's *entourage*, where he obliges us constantly to remain'; and the explanation is not unreasonable. The provision which Louis had made for his daughter could not be regarded as an excessive endowment for a Royal Princess, whilst Beaujeu was far from being a wealthy man before his accession to the Bourbon Dukedom; and the position of unofficial Regents in which events placed the Beaujeus made it necessary that they should maintain an appropriate state and dignity, and participate becomingly in the life, the gaieties, and the incessant and costly peregrinations of the Court. On the assumption that the whole tale of the Royal subventions has been preserved, their amount[1] would appear to be trifling in comparison with the expense which attendance upon the King must have entailed; and if the acceptance of compensation for charges incurred in the public service is to be condemned as an act of depravity, then the world must readjust its ideas to suit a moral standard of which it has yet to make the elevating experience.

The charge of rapacity in other domestic relations is founded mainly upon the fact that the town of Lyons met with a chilly reception when it presented Madame with a service of plate costing 1,678 *livres*, and felt obliged to try 'to efface the impression of its maladroit parsimony' by the apologetic offer of another and more costly gift. But Anne, who had secured for Lyons an immensely valuable privilege in the restoration of its great fair, may

[1] About £20,000 in modern money: see Appendix, Table I. Marino Guistiniano, the Venetian Ambassador in France in 1535, complained to the Signory that his attendance upon the King during his travels had cost him 600 *écus* out of his own pocket, over and above his official salary. The Court was never in one place for a fortnight at a time, and 'this continual peregrination caused an excessive expense' which was not only an intolerable burden for a poor gentleman like himself, but would have been a serious matter for a rich man: Tommaseo, *Relations*, vol. i, pp.108–10.

have looked, not so much to the intrinsic value of its offering, as to the relative shabbiness of the recognition; and a man is not to be accounted grasping, because, after conferring a signal boon upon a stranger at the cost of some personal sacrifice, he looks askance upon the petty cash which is tendered in recognition of his service. That Anne habitually prostituted her authority for mercenary ends is as little established as that she was accustomed to accept the bribes with which foreign powers thought to tempt her. In view of the public opinion of the day, the striking thing is, not that she took what she did, but that she took so little. No student of the period needs to be told that before their succession to the Bourbon Dukedom the Beaujeus possessed no great wealth, held no great fiefs, and occupied no great offices. The prizes which had been within their gift they had bestowed to conciliate the enemies of the Crown or to reward its faithful servants. Standing disinterestedly aside from the scramble for pensions and for place, they had permitted the Constableship to go to the Duke of Bourbon, and the Governorship of Paris and the Île-de-France to be conferred on the Duke of Orleans; and it was at their instigation that the immensely lucrative office of Admiral had been bestowed upon the able and industrious Graville. Like Clive in the presence of the hoarded wealth of India, Madame, if she had contrasted her receipts with her opportunities during her tenure of power, might have stood aghast at her own moderation.

In passing to the question of the Bourbon inheritance we enter upon more debatable ground. The case against Anne is thus stated by M. Pélicier,[1] whose condemnation is made the more impressive by the fact that his admiration for Anne's talents and career knows few other qualifications. Towards the end of her life, he says, Madame allowed her family feeling to get the better of her patriotism. In 1487, before she had become Duchess, she began to entertain fears that she or her children by a possible subsequent marriage might be deprived of the inheritance to which

[1] *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu*, pp. 210–12: Chartres, 1882. *Cf.* the views of M. Ch. Petit-Dutaillis in the *Histoire de France*, ed. Lavisse, vol. iv, Part II, p. 421: Paris, 1902.

her husband was heir, and of which the greater part seemed likely to revert to the Crown. She therefore set to work to obtain from her brother's docility a strange act which authorized a mutual cession of present and prospective rights between husband and wife. The secret object with which this power of disposition was sought was to prevent the return to the Crown of all those fiefs of the House of Bourbon which were subject to the rule of appanages, and at the same time to defeat as far as possible the claims of the Montpensier branch of the House;[1] and the effect of its exercise would be to establish in the centre of France a feudal sovereignty resembling that created in the north by the Dukes of Burgundy, which Louis XI had experienced so much difficulty in destroying. That this was Anne's intention appears from the advice which she gave on her death-bed to the future Constable, her son-in-law, as deposed to by the Bishop of Autun at the Constable's trial. 'My son,' she said to him, 'remember that the House of Bourbon used to be the ally of the House of Burgundy, and that during the time of that alliance it flourished and prospered. What the state of affairs is now you perceive, and the litigation by which you are harassed proceeds entirely from the lack of alliances I pray and command you to make an alliance with the Emperor. Promise me that you will do this with the utmost diligence at your command, and I shall die with my mind the more at ease.' 'Thus', says M. Mignet,[2] 'the thing which had been done by all the great feudatories and Royal Princes when their interests clashed with those of the Crown, the thing which had been done quite recently by the Dukes of Burgundy, the Dukes of Brittany, and by Louis himself while still Dauphin, the thing which during the whole of the sixteenth century and half of the seventeenth would be done by the Kings of Navarre, the Dukes of Orleans, and the Princes of Condé, this very thing did Anne recommend to her son-in-law, the Constable, before her death.' And Michelet comments thus[3]: 'The reputation of Anne de Beaujeu would stand too high, had not this able perpetuator of

[1] Referring to La Mure, *Histoire des Ducs de Bourbon*, vol. ii, pp. 408–12.
[2] *Rivalité de François I et de Charles-Quint*, 2nd edit., p. 367.
[3] *Histoire de France*, vol. ix, pp. 135–6.

Louis XI's anti-feudal policy herself raised up feudalism's doughtiest champion in the person of the too famous Constable of Bourbon. Out of a fatal pride which contradicts all her actions and calls her genius in question, she heaped on the head of this young, audacious, and evil creature a heritage composed of countless provinces.'

M. Pélicier considers it incumbent upon us to admit that, whatever the claims of Anne as Regent to be reckoned among the founders of French unity, as Duchess of Bourbon she has no pretensions to such a distinction. Like Anne of Austria in later days, he thinks, she changed her maxims with her situation; she continued her father's work at first, because her personal interests were identical with those of the Crown; but the moment those interests differed, she abandoned the national cause, to embrace a policy which was purely selfish. It is true that Anne cannot be acquitted of impropriety in creating a heritage of dangerous dimensions, or of unwisdom in transmitting intact to one heir [1] a power in which an ignoble mind might find an incitement to disloyalty. But unless we are to accept at its face value the evidence of the Bishop of Autun —and it may be thought to smack of the *ex post facto* explanation—we may find the inspiration of Madame's conduct in motives less at variance with the general tenour of her career. If in later life she modified her attitude towards the Crown, it may have been that she had learned to regret the completeness of her own achievement, and to deplore the advent of an autocracy which liberated high-born folly from the fetters of salutary restraint. That her policy had from the outset been dictated by purely selfish considerations it is difficult to believe. Pierre de Beaujeu had always been the heir presumptive of the Duchy of Bourbon. If Anne's secret purpose had been the acquisition of a feudal principality, the obvious course for her to

[1] By her will dated 1 July 1521 Anne devised and bequeathed all her property to Charles, Duke of Bourbonnais, and his heirs general; failing them, to Louis of Bourbon, Prince of La Roche-sur-Yon; and failing him, to Charles of Bourbon, his brother. Her rights were twofold: first, as the surviving parent of Suzanne; and next under the will of Duke Pierre, who had nominated her as his universal legatee and devisee in the event, which had happened, of Suzanne dying without leaving issue: La Mure, *Histoire des Ducs de Bourbon*, vol. iii, pp. 235–8.

pursue was to throw in her lot with the princely reactionaries who aimed at the disruption of France ; and it is an insult to her intelligence and courage to suppose that with that end in view she would have awaited the operation of legal documents of doubtful validity, after the power of the Crown had been preserved and augmented by her own exertions. Moreover, when in a position to shake the throne to its foundations, she had laid down her authority without an effort to retain it ; and in that the truly crucial episode of her career her conduct decisively negatived the presumption of treacherous or greedy aims.

Anne was no saint. The blood which flowed in her veins she inherited from a line of Kings more remarkable for worldly talents than for heavenly virtues ; and she would have been content that men should see in her meekly pious sister, Jeanne, the spiritual heir of St. Louis, if she herself might be accounted a worthy scion of the stock whence had sprung the clever, crafty, and courageous rulers who had made the monarchy what it was. It has been said of her [1] that she 'reproduces all the traits of Louis XI except his cruelty. Pushing cunning to the point of perfidy, an adept in the arts of corruption, outwardly humble but inwardly resolute and proud—in all these respects Anne recalls Louis XI. Divide that you may rule ; separate your enemies, to crush them more easily ; use instruments however vile, provided they be clever ; take back with one hand what you have given with the other :—such were the maxims which the father bequeathed to the daughter, and which she dutifully obeyed. . . . It would be an endless task to set out in detail all the cunning and cleverness and perfidy of her *régime*.'

Drawn in these sombre tones, the picture lacks the high lights by which the gloom ought to be relieved in a faithful representation of Anne's moral physiognomy. To say that she is her father's daughter is true, but it is not the whole truth. The insight into human weakness and folly and the dexterity in turning it to account, the self-restraint which resembles hypocrisy, the astuteness akin to deceit—these Anne inherited from Louis ; but alike in her public and in her private life she exhibited qualities which were all her

[1] Pélicier, *Essai sur le Gouvernement de la Dame de Beaujeu*, pp. 206–7.

own. Brantôme, no lenient critic, allows that she waged an implacable war on evil and misconduct which made her the great instructress of the age, so that her household became the school in which every highborn damsel aspired to serve her apprenticeship in honour and virtue and the graces of gentle breeding. In her public life she is entitled to be judged as the product of her generation and by the moral standard of her age. On the political stage on which her part was cast there was no scope for the practice of a nice morality. Corruption, perfidy, and deceit were the stock-in-trade of princes, and in a contest with opponents as unscrupulous as Ferdinand of Aragon, Maximilian, and Henry VII, as shifty as Landois, Orleans, and d'Albret, the path of honour must have proved to be the high-road to defeat. Anne followed of necessity the political fashions of her time, but along with its prevailing failings she displayed qualities by which those failings were more than half redeemed. The more deeply the student probes the obscurities of a period which is still imperfectly understood, the more fully will he share the conviction of one of its ablest exponents that 'it is impossible to rate too highly either the intelligence or the activity of this young woman; attacked on all sides and everywhere victorious; dashing with amazing rapidity from one part of France to another, like a general on the field of battle—at Bordeaux or in Anjou to-day, at Beauvais or in Burgundy to-morrow; often betrayed, but never surprised; repairing fortresses, posting guards, directing armies; winning the devotion of the troops and the love of the people; and always gaining her victories without drawing the sword from the scabbard.' [1]

The bloodless victory is, in truth, the distinguishing mark of Anne's régime. Louis XI was as fearless as his daughter, as resolute, as tenacious of purpose, as dexterous in diplomacy, as decisive in action; but he lacked the magnanimity which Anne never failed to display in the hour of triumph. Her Regency is unsoiled by the violence and cruelty, the pitiless pursuit of revenge, the travesties of

[1] Ch. Rossignol, 'La Bourgogne sous Charles VIII' in *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de Dijon*, Second Series, vol. vi, pp. 6–7: Dijon, 1857.

justice, and the judicial murders which marked the reign of her father; and an honourable imprisonment is the greatest severity which she metes out even to the rebel taken in arms. The indulgence extended to Louis of Orleans and his feudal associates bears the hall-mark of true greatness. To compass their own selfish ends, the French Princes had travelled far on the road of treason, and to overthrow Anne's power they had not scrupled to call in the foreign invader, whose aim was the destruction of France. A smaller mind might have feared lest leniency towards those who had set at naught the claims of loyalty and patriotism might be attributed to cowardice or mistaken for weakness, and a spirit less courageous would have questioned the expediency of gentleness.[1] Anne felt no such misgivings. In the main, perhaps, her policy was based upon a prudent calculation of the balance of advantage. Amid the many perils by which she was beset she saw that her best hope of safety lay in the want of vigour and cohesion which characterized her inert and irresolute opponents, and she knew that, whilst severity would galvanize the whole nobility of the country into a ferment of feudal passion, moderation would deprive the hotheads of support, even when it made no converts to her own side. But in concluding that Anne's forbearance was therefore politic, we must not forget that it could not have been inspired by prudence alone. In the circumstances in which she was placed none but a ruler who was both brave and wise would have felt an inclination to mercy, or, feeling it, would have ventured its indulgence.

Whatever the divergence of opinion about Anne's moral characteristics or political methods, there can be no question about the splendour of her achievement or the value of the services which she had rendered to her country. Called to preside over its destinies when on the threshold of womanhood, to rule without a recognized title, and in a daunting loneliness to confront the fury of humiliated

[1] 'Et, pour ce que juçques ycy nous avons voulu paciffier leurs folles entreprinses le plus doulcement que avons peu, cette raison et non autre leur à donné cause de les faire recommancer si souvent, pour tousjours cuyder trouver moyen de mectre à execucion leurs mauvaises entreprinses': *Lettres de Charles VIII*, vol. i, p. 190.

nobles, the discontent of a suffering people, and the enmity of injured neighbours, she had shouldered the burden of government without fear and had borne it without faltering. The very completeness of her success obscures the magnitude of the difficulties which she had been called upon to surmount and the extent of the dangers by which she had been assailed. Had she not stood by the side of the infant heir of Louis XI, the monarchy might well have succumbed in a turmoil of domestic disturbance and external aggression, wherein the remnants of a kingdom shattered by hostile hands would have sunk into the impotence of feudal disintegration. For such, and no less, was the issue which the Regency of Anne de Beaujeu decided. The work of preservation which she accomplished was not much inferior either in difficulty or in value to a labour of constructive genius; and the perfection of its accomplishment, evident from the event, is clearly reflected in the diplomatic correspondence of the time. Upon the first experience of Anne's statecraft a new note of apprehension is sounded in the Courts of Europe, and, as its effects unfold themselves, it changes rapidly into a cry of alarm. A cloud has arisen in the political sky, darkening the horizon with its presage of evil, and though the prophet who runs before the King's chariot may fall by the way, yet still the cloud spreads. In Italy, in Germany, in England, in Spain men behold it and fear, dreading what it may portend. The cloud is the new might of a France which 'was now entire and at unity with itself, and never so mighty many years before'.[1] Anne had led her country to final triumph in the noblest of all its victories, the victory over itself; and thereby she had earned the right to live on in its grateful admiration by the proud name of Madame la Grande.

[1] Bacon, 'Historie of the Raigne of King Henry the Seventh', in the *Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. J. Spedding, vol. vi, p. 119.

APPENDIX

THE FRENCH MONETARY SYSTEM

The monetary system of the *ancien régime* is intricate and confusing, but since the history of a nation cannot be understood without some comprehension of the significance of its currency, an attempt to unravel its complexities may be of service to the reader.

The system was a dual one, being based upon ideal or fictitious, and upon real or actual, money. The former was employed as a means of computation; the latter was the medium in which payments were made.

The fictitious money was known as *monnaie tournois*, and consisted of *livres*, *sous*, *and deniers*, 12 *deniers* making one *sou*, and 20 *sous* one *livre*. It was in this money that prices were fixed, debts reckoned, and financial and commercial calculations made; but the *livre*, *sou*, and *denier* were merely conventional symbols, with no material existence in cash, and served only as a *monnaie de compte*.

The *monnaie réelle* or *monnaies sonnantes*, the actual or metallic currency or cash in circulation, consisted of pieces in gold, silver, and base metal minted in the realm, and of foreign coins admitted to circulation within it. The French pieces were very numerous, and varied from time to time, the most important during the period covered by this work being the golden *écu* and, in silver, the *blanc*, *grand blanc*, and *teston*.

The intrinsic value of a coin depended upon the number struck from the mark, *i.e.* upon its weight, and upon the 'fineness' of the metal of which it was composed, *i.e.* upon the amount of alloy. In both respects coins were subject to frequent variations. The mark of gold was worth about £32 10*s*., and the mark of silver about two guineas, the mark of *argent le Roi* containing one part of alloy in twenty-four. Theoretically, the mark was minted into such a number of coins as would amount collectively to its own exact weight; but the prospect of illicit profit by minting a larger number offered a temptation which the Government did not always resist; and even when its honesty got the better of its cupidity, the processes of assaying metals and minting coins as then practised fell short of the standard of accuracy requisite for ensuring precision in weight and purity. Thus were introduced the complications known

as *remède de poids* as regards weight and *remède de loy* or *d'aloy* as regards purity.

A further complication was the prevalent employment of provincial and seigneurial money and of foreign currencies,[1] the use of the latter being favoured at once by their relative stability of intrinsic value and by the scarcity of Royal money. So general was the circulation of these foreign coins, and so difficult to restrict, that in an ordinance of 1488, passed with the express object of prohibiting alien money, it was found necessary to authorize the continued use of the coins of no less than twelve foreign States.

The legal value of a coin depended upon its statutory valuation as expressed in *monnaie tournois*, that is to say, upon the amount for which it was legal tender under the terms of the ordinance in force at the time. There being nothing in the form or denomination of the coin to denote its legal value, it was easy to alter that value by a new ordinance without any corresponding change in the weight or purity of the piece; and not only was the purity of the metal unreliable, and the number of pieces coined from the mark constantly changing, but the legal value of every coin as expressed in *livres*, *sous*, and *deniers*, was also subjected to incessant modification (see below, Table II). It would seem that a system not in itself simple, and rendered doubly confusing by irregular fluctuation, must have placed a severe strain upon the rudimentary machinery of finance and commerce. Take, for example, the case of a debt of 15,834 *livres*. To pay this debt in February 1488 it would have been necessary to disburse either 8,736 *écus au soleil* (this coin then being legal tender for 1*l.* 16*s.* 3*d.*), or 9,048 *écus à la couronne* (this coin being legal tender for 1*l.* 15*s.* 0*d.*). To discharge the same debt in December 1516, however, the appropriate number of *écus au soleil* would have been 7,917, and of *écus à la couronne* 8,120, the coins at that time being legal tender respectively for 2 *livres* and 1*l.* 19*s.* 0*d.* It is to be observed, too, that in the case supposed the payment is a large one, made in gold, whereas the transactions of every-day life were affairs of silver and copper, carried out in coins of all sorts, kinds, and countries, each with its own fluctuating value.

[1] 'Foreign' money included, not only the coins of foreign countries, but also the pieces minted by the French Kings in their foreign possessions, e.g. Milan. In the *Ordonnances des Rois de France, Règne de François I*, vol. i, Introduction, p. lxvii, M. Levasseur gives the following list of local currencies, minted between 1483 and 1584, most of which might be regarded either as provincial or as foreign, according to the point of view: At Arles and Cambrai, by the Bishops; at Avignon, by the Pope; in Béarn, by the Vicomte; at Châtelet-Vauvilliers and Franquemont, by the Seigneurs; in Franche-Comté, by the Emperor; in Lorraine, by the Duke; at Lure and Murbach, by the Abbés; at Montbéliard and in Roussillon, by the Comtes; in Navarre, by the King; and in Orange, by the Prince.

Yet a further complication was introduced by the fact that, in addition to *monnaie tournois*, *monnaie parisis* was also occasionally employed as a *monnaie de compte*. On the collapse of the Carolingian empire the establishment of monetary systems and the minting of coins had, like other Royal prerogatives, become matters of seigneurial privilege, with the result that an immense diversity of systems and currencies had come into being, and in different districts *livres tournois*, *livres parisis*, *livres angevins*, *bordelais*, *poitevins*, *toulousains*, and many others had possessed a local validity. Through the unification gradually imposed by the Crown, most of these systems had ceased to be of practical consequence by the time of Louis XI, though their existence as currencies might still be traced in such coins as the *sou* and *denier parisis* and the *denier bordelais*. *Monnaie parisis* had originally consisted of the coins minted in Paris by the Dukes of that city, and had become the Royal money upon the accession of the first Capetian sovereign; but after the time of Louis XI, who discontinued its issue, it ceased to exist as a currency, and as a *monnaie de compte* it had long been supplanted in popular favour by *monnaie tournois*. But until it was abolished by Louis XIV the use of it as a medium of accountancy might still be met with. The theoretical value of the *livre parisis* was higher than that of the *livre tournois*, the relations between them being as 5 is to 4.

The value of *monnaie tournois* was never fixed by ordinances or other acts of the public authority, and must be calculated either from the intrinsic value of the equivalent amount of metallic currency or from the value in commodities or services which a given sum would command. But it is when we try to assign a value to any given coin, or to any amount expressed in *livres*, *sous*, and *deniers*, that the real difficulty of an inquiry into the French monetary system is encountered, and this difficulty is increased when we attempt to express the result in terms of our own standard of money values. What at any given date is the weight of a specified coin? What the standard of purity of the metal from which it was minted? What at that time were the relations of gold and silver? For what amount in *monnaie tournois* was the coin legal tender? What at the same date was the actual value of the *livre tournois*? And what its relative value, that is to say, to what sum of modern money did it correspond, measured in its purchasing power in commodities or services? To few of these questions can a precise answer be given, and to some the answer is almost entirely a matter of conjecture. The purchasing power of the *livre*, for instance, may be calculated in different ways, and with widely divergent results. It may be measured by its command of commodities, e.g. corn or meat, or of services. But the price of commodities varied incessantly by reason of inequalities in supply;[1] and neither it nor the price

[1] Seasonal variations, according to the quality of the harvest; local variations, by reason of the lack of facilities for commercial interchange.

of services stood in the same relation as now to the social life of the people. The result is that economists vary greatly in their estimates of both the actual and the relative value of the livre.[1] The Tables printed below are founded upon the most authoritative of these estimates, and may be of assistance to the reader who desires to gain an acquaintance with the monetary system of the *ancien régime*.

With the currency in its more general aspects, and with such topics as the economic effects of the monetary policy of the Government, I do not deal in this Appendix, since it will be more convenient to discuss them in connexion with the social and economic conditions which I propose to describe in a later volume ; but there is one phenomenon, apparent from the Tables, to which attention may suitably be paid here. This is the steady diminution in the actual and relative value of the *livre*. The diminution had already set in under Louis XI, when the former fluctuations began to give way to a regular fall ; and from comparatively early in the sixteenth century it was complicated and intensified by the economic effects of the influx of gold and silver from American mines. At the end of the fifteenth century Europe was very short of precious metals, and it has been estimated that the total stock of both did not much exceed 33 millions sterling. Up to that time production had been stationary, the only sources of supply being the African mines and the Eastern trade in the case of gold and the German mines in the case of silver. Coupled with a commercial expansion which constantly increased the demands upon the currency, this shortage of metals had led to a marked appreciation in their value. By the results of the discoveries of Columbus the situation was completely and more or less suddenly reversed. An enormous expansion in the supply of the precious metals operated instantly to depress their value in relation to other commodities, or, in other words, to raise prices and to lower the value of the *livre*. It may be true that in some respects the discovery of America was ' the monetary salvation and resurrection of the Old World ' (W. A. Shaw, *The History of Currency*, p. 61), but its beneficent effects were not everywhere appreciated. Since the reign of Louis XII, said the author of a *Traitte des Finances* published in 1580 (pp. 379–80), gold and silver have come in such abundance from Peru and other newly discovered countries that prices have gone up to ten times what they used to be, as is proved by old contracts and by the fact that the annual rents of an estate are now equal to the purchase price of the whole of it a century ago, and that the farmer can now sell for 1,000 *livres* produce that used to be worth only 100 *livres*. ' At Paris ', says a modern writer (Michel Chevalier, *La Monnaie—Cours d'Économie Politique fait au Collège de France*, p. 371), ' a *hectolitre* of corn

[1] By employing different modes of calculation M. Levasseur (*op. cit.*, p. clxxxix) gets eight different intrinsic values for the *livre* in 1530, varying from 3*s.* 0½*d.* to 4*s.* 6½*d.*

had been purchasable for 14 or 16 grains of silver; it rose to double the price, then treble, and even higher. All commodities underwent a corresponding increase in price. . . . The result . . . was that everyone with a fixed income was made poorer. . . . In contemporary records may be studied the disappointment of some, the satisfaction of others, the astonishment of all, for no one understood the reason for a change by which each according to his position suffered or profited.'

History repeats itself. The influx of precious metals from America four centuries ago has been paralleled within recent years by the flood of paper currencies which impoverished Governments have let loose upon Europe, and once again the possessor of the fixed income has been made painfully aware that he is the helpless victim of inexorable economic laws. If his optimism be more robust than his bank balance, he will cling to the hope that the present dislocation of values will be transient, and that the future historian of England in the twentieth century will not be under the necessity of illustrating his work with an inquest *post mortem* upon the British pound.

TABLE I[1]

Mean Value[2] *of the livre tournois.*	*Multiple.*	*Approximate Equivalent in modern money.*[2]
		£ s. d.
1456–1487 . . 4 3	6	1 5 6
1488–1500 . . 3 9	6	1 2 6
1501–1511 . . 3 9	5	18 9
1512–1525 . . 3 2	5	15 10
1526–1540 . . 3 2	4	12 8
1541–1550 . . 2 8	4	10 8
1551–1560 . . 2 8	3	8 0
1561–1572 . . 2 6	3	7 6
1573–1575 . . 2 4	3	7 0
1576–1579 . . 2 4	2½	5 10
1580–1600 . . 2 1	2½	5 3
1601 . . 2 1	3	6 3
1602–1614 . . 1 11	3	5 9

[1] D'Avenel, *Histoire Économique de la Propriété . . . et de tous les Prix*, vol. i, pp. 27, 32, 62, and 75, and vol. v, pp. 350–1.

[2] In English money at pre-war values.

TABLE II

PART 1. GOLD

Name of Coin.	*Date of Ordinance.*	*No. to the Mark.*	*Value in monnaie tournois.*	*Mean value of the livre.*[1]	*Corresponding value of coin.*[1]	*Approximate modern equivalent.*
			l. s. d.	*s. d.*	*s. d.*	*£ s. d.*
Écu à la Couronne .	1475 Nov. 2	72	1 12 1	4 3	6 10	2 1 0
,, ,,	1488 Jan. 30	,,	1 15 0	3 9	6 7	1 19 6
,, ,,	1516 Nov. 27	,,	1 19 0	3 2	6 2	1 10 10
,, ,,	1533 Mar. 5	,,	2 3 6	3 2	6 10	1 7 4
,, ,,	1568 Aug. 11	,,	2 11 0	2 6	6 5	19 3
,, ,,	1602 Sept.	,,	3 4 0	1 11	6 2	18 6
Écu à la Croisette .	1541 Mar. 19	$71\frac{1}{8}$	2 5 0	2 8	6 0	1 4 0
Écu à la Salamandre	1540 Feb. 24	$71\frac{1}{8}$	2 5 0	3 2	7 2	1 8 8
Écu au Porc-Épic .	1507 Nov. 19	70	1 16 3	3 9	6 9	1 13 9
,, ,,	1516 July 3	,,	2 0 0	3 2	6 4	1 11 8
Écu au Soleil . .	1475 Nov. 2	70	1 13 0	4 3	7 0	2 2 0
,, ,,	1488 Jan. 30	,,	1 16 3	3 9	6 9	1 13 9
,, ,,	1516 Nov. 27	,,	2 0 0	3 2	6 4	1 11 8
,, ,,	1519 May 18	$71\frac{1}{2}$	,,	,,	,,	,,
,, ,,	July 21	$71\frac{1}{8}$	,,	,,	,,	,,
,, ,,	1533 Mar. 5	,,	2 5 0	,,	7 1	1 8 4
,, ,,	1550 Jan. 23	,,	2 6 0	2 8	6 2	1 4 8
,, ,,	1561 Aug. 30	$72\frac{1}{2}$	2 10 0	2 6	6 3	18 9
,, ,,	1568 Aug. 11	,,	2 12 0	,,	6 6	19 6
,, ,,	1569 Nov. 23	,,	2 13 0	,,	6 8	1 0 0
,, ,,	1570 Aug. 30	,,	2 14 0	,,	6 9	1 0 3
,, ,,	1572 July 1	,,	2 12 0	,,	6 6	19 6
,, ,,	1573 June 9	,,	2 14 0	2 4	6 4	19 0
,, ,,	1574 Sept. 22	,,	2 18 0	,,	6 9	1 0 3
,, ,,	1575 May 31	,,	3 0 0	,,	7 0	1 1 0
,, ,,	1577 June 15	,,	3 5 0	,,	7 7	19 0
,, ,,	Nov. 20	,,	3 0 0	,,	7 0	17 6
,, ,,	1602 Sept.	,,	3 5 0	1 11	6 3	18 9
Henri . . .	1550 Jan. 23	67	2 10 0	2 8	6 8	1 6 8
Réal, or Royal, d'or	1475		2 0 0	4 3	8 6	2 11 0
,, ,,	1498		1 19 0	3 9	7 4	2 4 0
,, ,,	1512		,,	3 2	6 2	1 10 10
,, ,,	1533		2 7 3	,,	7 6	1 10 0

[1] In English money at pre-war values.

PART 2. SILVER AND BASE METAL

Name of Coin.	*Date of Ordinance.*	*Value in monnaie tournois.* s.	d.
Blanc	1465 July		10
,,	1515 Jan. 1	1	0
Blanc à la Couronne	1488 Jan. 29	1	0
Blanc or Douzain à la Salamandre	1540 Feb. 24	1	0
Blanc au K. Couronné	1488 Nov. 11		10
Blanc au Soleil	1475 Nov. 2	1	0
,, ,,	1488 Apr. 24	1	1
Blanc Carolus	1488 Nov. 11		10
Denier Bordelais	1478 Nov. 17		$0\frac{3}{5}$
Denier Parisis	1476 Sept. 15		$1\frac{1}{4}$
Double Tournois	1476 Sept. 15		2
Douzain	1548 Mar. 31	1	0
Douzain à la Croisette	1541 Mar. 19	1	0
Douzain or Grand Blanc Franciscus	1515 Jan. 23	1	0
Franc	1575 May 31	20	0
,,	1602 Sept.	21	4
Grand Blanc à l'F.	1519 July 21		10
Grand Blanc à la Couronne	1488 Jan. 30		10
,, ,, ,,	1488 Apr. 24	1	0
Grand Blanc ancien	1475 Nov. 2		11
Grand Blanc au L. Couronné	1511 Dec. 5	1	3
Grand Blanc au Porc-Épic	1507 Nov. 19		10
Grand Blanc au Soleil	1475 Nov. 2	1	0
,, ,, ,,	1488 Apr. 24	1	1
Grand Blanc dit Ludovicus	1507 Nov. 19	1	0
,, ,, ,,	1512 Feb. 3		10
Grand Blanc unzain	1485 Oct. 5		11
Gros (denier)	1512 Feb. 3	2	6
Gros d'argent	1473 Jan. 8	2	9
,, ,,	1477 May 30	2	10
,, ,,	1488 Apr. 24	3	0
Gros de Roi	1477 May 30	2	10
,, ,,	1488 Apr. 24	3	0
Gros de Six Blancs	1550 Mar. 25	2	6
Gros de Nêle	1550 Mar. 25	2	6
Hardi or Liard	1478 Nov. 17		3
Petit Blanc	1475 Nov. 2		6
Petit Tournois	1486 Feb. 16		1
Quart d'Écu	1580 Oct. 17	15	0
,, ,,	1602 Sept.	16	0
Sou Parisis	1512 Feb. 3	1	3
Teston	1514 May 14	10	0
,,	1533 Mar. 5	10	6
,,	1541 Mar. 19	10	8
,,	1543 July 25	11	0
,,	1550 Jan. 23	11	4
,,	1561 Aug. 30	12	0
,,	1573 June 9	13	0
,,	1575 June 17	14	6
,,	1577 June 15	16	0
,,	Nov. 20	14	6
,,	1602 Sept.	15	6
Tournois	1476 Sept. 15		1

PART 3. FOREIGN AND MISCELLANEOUS

Name of Coin.	*Date.*	*Value in monnaie tournois.* l. s. d.
Aigle	1512	2 13 0
Alphonsin	1533	3 9 0
,,	1541	3 10 0
Angelot	1512	2 16 0
,,	1533	3 6 0
,,	1541	3 7 6
Carolus de Flandre	1533	1 2 6
Chaise or Chadière	1512	1 13 0
Ducat, Navarre	1512	1 11 0
Ducat, Portugal	1533	2 5 6
,, ,,	1541	2 6 9
,, ,,	1549	2 8 0
Ducat à petite croix	1546	2 5 0
Ducat à longue croix	1546	2 3 0
Ducat, Spain	1541	2 6 3
Double Ducat, Spain	1533	4 11 0
,, ,,	1541	4 12 6
,, ,,	1549	4 16 0
Ducat, Venice, Genoa, &c.	1498	1 17 6
,, ,,	1533	2 5 6
,, ,,	1541	2 6 9
,, ,,	1549	2 8 0
Double Ducat, Venice, Genoa, &c.	1488	3 15 0
,, ,,	1499	3 14 6
,, ,,	1512	3 14 0
Écu aux Vaches	1512	1 14 0
Écu d'Angleterre à la rose couronnée	1533	2 4 0
,, ,,	1541	2 4 10
Écu d'Angleterre à rose et croix	1533	2 1 0
,, ,,	1541	2 1 6
,, ,,	1549	2 1 10
Écu de Bretagne	1512	1 16 0
Écu de Castille et Sicile	1546	2 1 6
Écu de Dauphiné	1486	1 12 1
,, ,,	1488	1 15 0
,, ,,	1512	1 16 0
Écu de Ferrare	1546	2 1 6
Écu de Lucques	1546	2 1 6
Écu de Venise	1546	2 2 0
Écu du Pape	1546	2 1 6
Écu Vieil	1498	2 0 0
,,	1512	2 13 0
,,	1533	2 11 0
Écu Vieil de Gênes	1546	2 2 0
Florin, Aragon	1512	1 5 0
Florin, Flanders	1533	1 14 6
,,	1541	1 15 6
Florin, Germany	1512	1 7 0
Florin, Utrecht	1512	1 4 0
,,	1533	1 8 0
,,	1541	1 9 0
Folle	1512	4 0 0
Franc à cheval	1533	2 8 6
Franc à pied	1512	2 13 0
Grand Réal, Austria	*c.* 1550	10 12 6

Name of Coin.	*Date.*	*Value in monnaie tournois.* l. s. d.
Guillermus	1512	1 19 0
Henrique	1512	2 10 0
Impériale d'or	1533	3 9 0
,,	1541	3 11 0
,,	1577	4 0 0
Lion	1498	2 3 0
,,	1533	2 13 0
Maille, or Obole, de Lorraine	1533	1 12 0
,, ,,	1541	1 13 6
Mouton	1512	3 7 0
Mouton à la petite laine	1512	2 4 0
Noble à la nef	1512	3 14 0
Noble à la rose	1512	4 0 0
,,	1533	5 0 0
,,	1541	5 2 6
,,	1549	5 2 0
Noble à l'écu	1512	4 5 0
Noble Henri	1498	3 14 0
,,	1533	4 12 0
,,	1541	4 14 0
Obole de Lorraine, *see* Maille		
Philippendale	1577	2 8 0
Philippus	1512	1 5 0
,,	1533	1 7 0
,,	1541	1 8 4
Réal d'or (Flemish)	*c.* 1550	3 15 0
Riddes	1498	1 18 6
,,	1533	2 0 6
,,	1541	2 8 0
Salut	1512	1 17 6
,,	1533	2 5 0
Scutin	1533	2 0 0
Toison d'or (Flemish)	*c.* 1550	3 3 0
Denier d'argent	*c.* 1550	2 6
Double Carolus (Flemish)	*c.* 1550	3 9
Florin au chat	1512	12 0
Gros d'Angleterre	1541	3 10
Gros de Dauphiné	1488	2 10
Gros de Gênes	1512	12 6
Gros de Lorraine	1541	2 8
Gros de Metz	1541	2 8
Gros de Milan	1512	9 0
Gros de Venise	1512	6 3
Morisque	1512	13 0
Réal d'argent (Flemish)	*c.* 1550	4 3
Réal d'argent, Spain	1541	3 9
Teston de Lorraine	1533	9 6
,,	1541	10 10
,,	1577	12 0
Teston, Portugal	1533	10 4
Teston, Italy	1533	10 6

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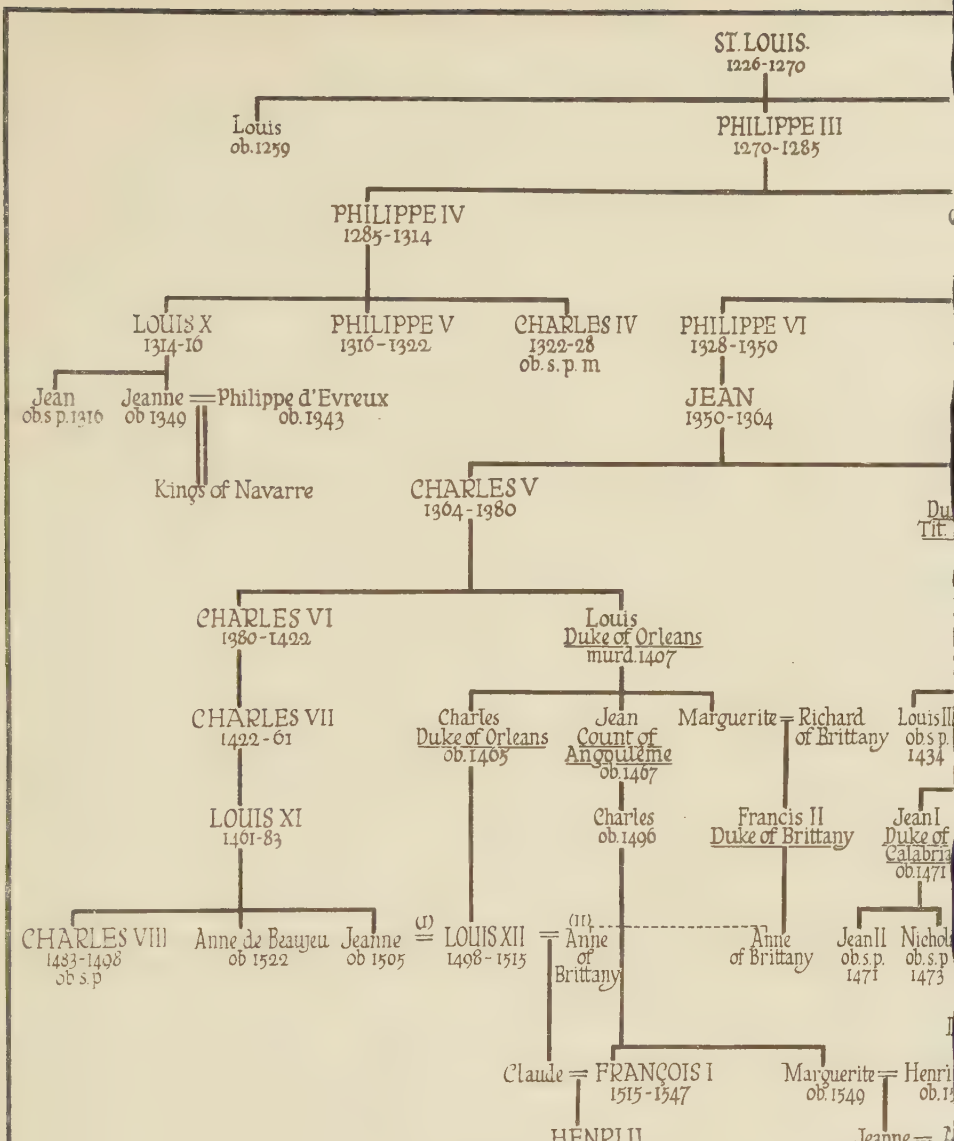

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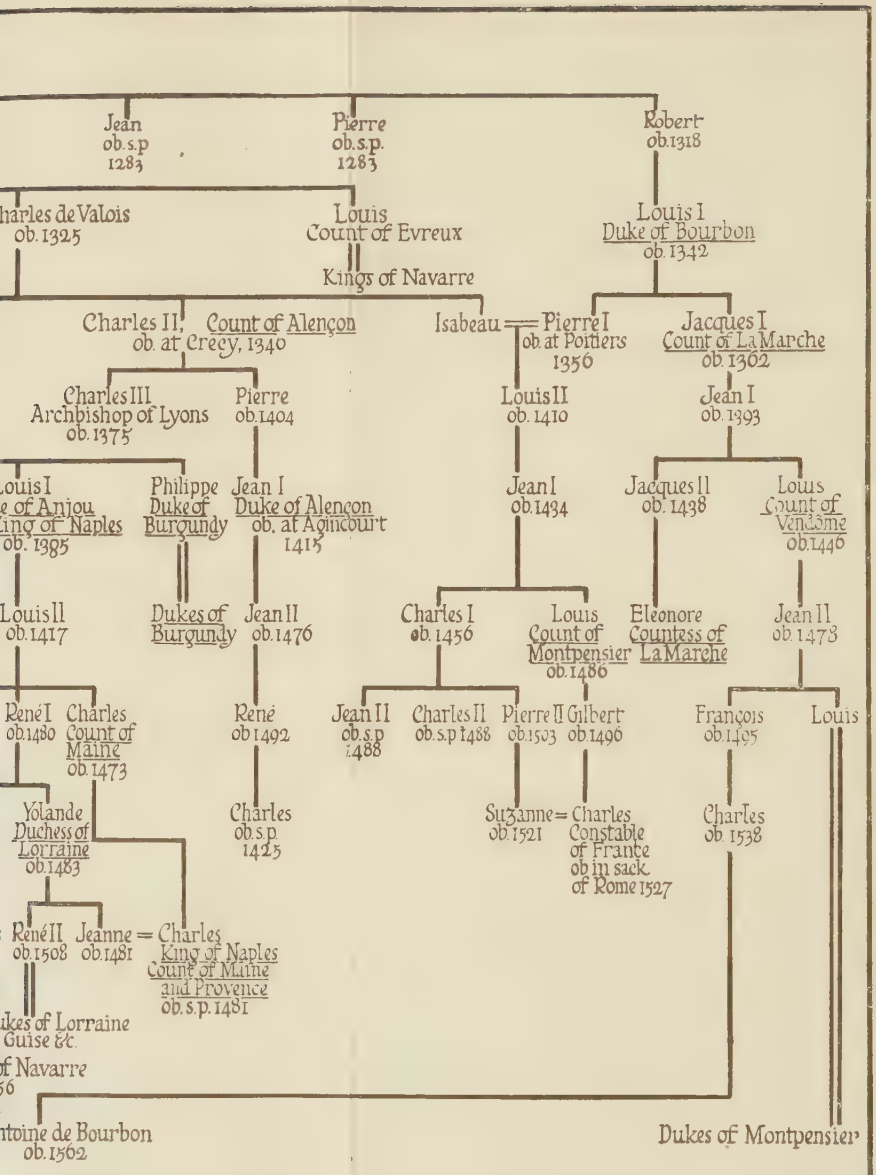

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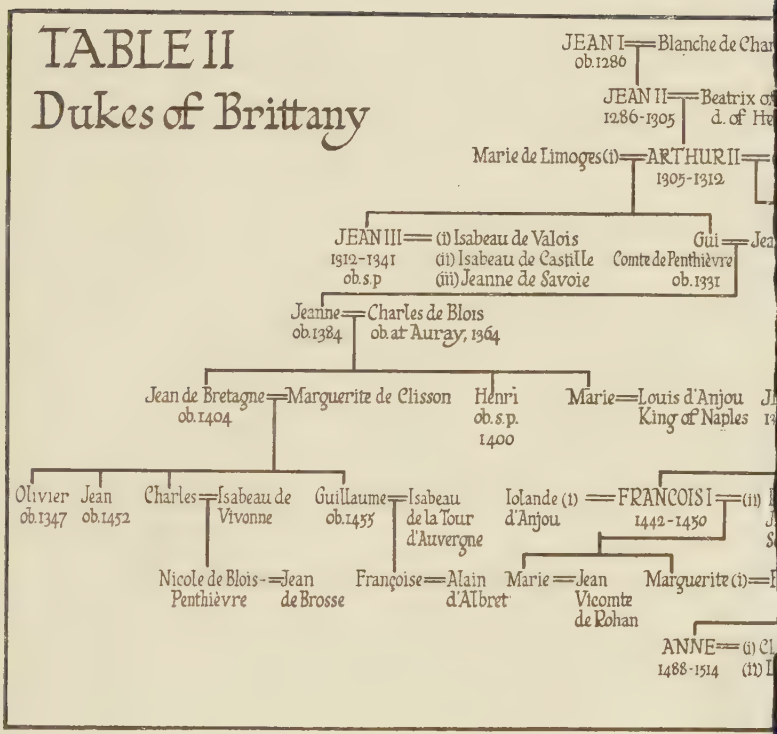
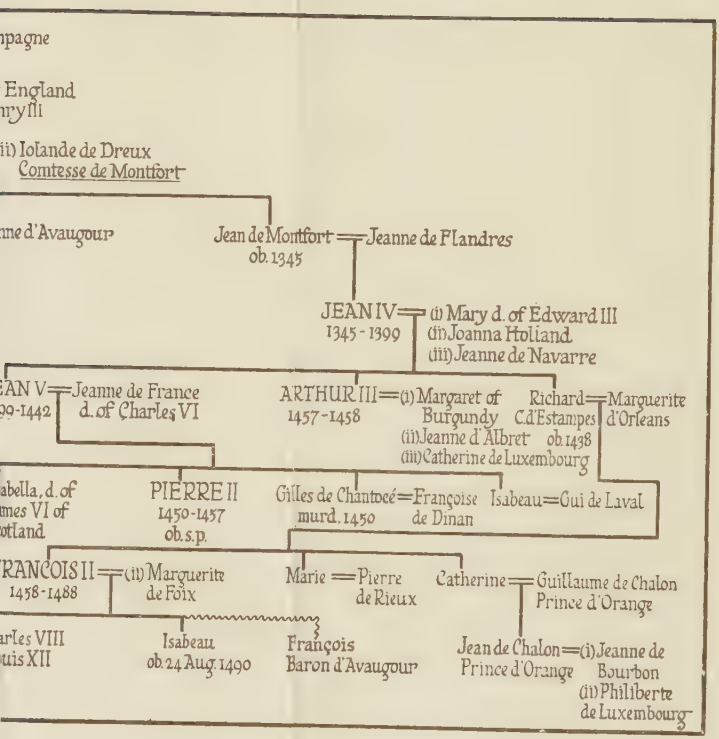


TABLE II
Dukes of Brittany
JEAN I ob.1280
Blanche de Char
JEAN II 1286-1305
Beatrix of
d. of He
Marie de Limoges (i)
ARTHUR II 1305-1312
JEAN III 1312-1341 ob.s.p
(i) Isabeau de Valois
(ii) Isabeau de Castille
(iii) Jeanne de Savoie
Guï
Comte de Penthièvre ob.1331
Jean
Jeanne ob.1384
Charles de Blois ob.at Auray, 1364
Jean de Bretagne ob.1404
Marguerite de Clisson
Henri ob.s.p. 1400
Marie
Louis d'Anjou King of Naples
Olivier ob.1347
Jean ob.1452
Charles
Isabeau de Vivonne
Guillaume ob.1433
Isabeau de la Tour d'Auvergne
Iolande (i) d'Anjou
FRANÇOIS I 1442-1450
(ii)
Nicole de Blois - Penthièvre
Jean de Brosse
Françoise
Alain d'Albret
Marie
Jean Vicomte de Rohan
Marguerite (i)
ANNE 1488-1514
(i)
(ii)


npagne
England
ry III
(ii) Iolande de Dreux
Comtesse de Montfort
nne d'Avaugour
Jean de Montfort ob. 1345
Jeanne de Flandres
JEAN IV 1345-1399
(i) Mary d. of Edward III
(ii) Joanna Holland
(iii) Jeanne de Navarre
EAN V 99-1442
Jeanne de France d. of Charles VI
ARTHUR III 1457-1458
(i) Margaret of Burgundy
(ii) Jeanne d'Albret
(iii) Catherine de Luxembourg
Richard C. d'Estampes ob. 1438
Marguerite d'Orleans
abella, d. of mes VI of otland
PIERRE II 1450-1457 ob. s.p.
Gilles de Chantocé murd. 1450
Françoise de Dinan
Isabeau
Gui de Laval
RANÇOIS II 1458-1488
(ii) Marguerite de Foix
Marie
Pierre de Rieux
Catherine
Guillaume de Chalon Prince d'Orange
arles VIII
uis XII
Isabeau ob. 24 Aug. 1490
François Baron d'Avaugour
Jean de Chalon Prince d'Orange
(i) Jeanne de Bourbon
(ii) Philiberte de Luxembourg

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